

DIVINE PRIORITIES AND OTHER MESSAGES

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A collection of articles and writings by H.A. Ironside from Divine Priorities and Other Messages, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

17 Chapters

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Divine Priorities and Other Messages

1. Divine Priorities and Other Messages

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”—MATTHEW 6: 33.

WE hear much these days about priorities. A few months ago the word was rarely ever used. To many it was comparatively unknown. The war has brought several new words into common usage which formerly had no particular appeal. It was so in connection with the last war. I recall very well being a witness in a lawsuit involving a will which was protested by the other side as a forgery. It was supposed to be an instrument conveying all the property of one brother to another. The widow had a will dated a few days earlier and her brother-in-law was endeavoring to take everything from her. As the trial progressed things began to look very dark, so far as the widow was concerned. The brother-in-law appeared to have an “iron-clad” case until it came to the last few minutes of cross-questioning by the attorney for the plaintiff, who put the defendant through a very thorough examination as to minute details connected with his contention that the will he had presented was not only valid but was the latest instrument given by his brother. The denouement was as striking as it was unexpected.

When he was asked to explain the circumstances under which the testament which he offered for probate had come to him, he declared that on a given date in 1912 his brother had come into his office and handed him the will, saying, “I have already given another will to my wife in order to keep her in good humor, but that was just a bit of camouflage. I am leaving everything to you.” The widow’s lawyer questioned him very definitely, inquiring, “Are you giving us the exact words used by your brother, or are you simply giving us the gist of them as you understood them?” He answered, “I am telling you exactly what my brother said. He told me that the first will was only a bit of camouflage and that all was to come to me.” Again the defendant’s lawyer inquired, “Is there any word in your testimony that you would like to change?” Rather angrily, the other replied, “No, sir; I have told you exactly what my brother said.” Then, after a moment’s silence, the attorney for the widow inquired, “Was your brother in the habit of using the word camouflage in 1912?” The effect upon everyone in the courtroom, including the probate judge, was electric. Everybody realized that the man had been trapped, for no one in the United States was in the habit of using the word camouflage before the World War which began in 1914. The case was soon decided in favor of the widow.

From the time the United States entered into the present world war and our vast resources were lined up behind our army, navy, and air force it was recognized that the government should have first claim upon all needful metals, and other things required. The priority rightfully belonged there. If civilian manufacturers or others desire a supply of any such materials they must apply for a special priority through the proper channels, otherwise they cannot obtain them. This we all recognize is as it should be. The war must come first. Other things can follow after.

However, we may also speak of divine priorities for just as in regard to many of the things which we have thought essential to our happiness, in days gone by we recognize governmental

priorities, so we need to realize that in all things our first duty and responsibility is to God Himself. The Old Testament prophets were constantly stressing the law of divine priorities. I wonder what the Shunamite woman thought when Elijah the prophet applied to her for room and board! She explained that her little store of food was almost gone; there was but a small quantity of meal in the bottom of the barrel and a little oil to mix with it. She was going to do a last baking for herself and her son and then there would be nothing left. But Elijah, the man of God, said, "Make me a cake first." One could imagine her exclaiming, "What, make you a cake first! you a stranger, when I and my son have so little left!" And the answer might well have been, "Yes, it is a question of priorities. Henceforth you are to run a boarding-house for God. Put God first and He will look after you and your needs." So off she went and did as she was bidden, and lo, she had more than enough as long as the famine lasted and the prophet remained as her guest. She gave God the first place and He in turn honored her faith and saw that she did not come to want. He will never be anyone's debtor. It is just a picture of what He will do for all of us when we give Him the first place in our lives, in other words, when we recognize the importance of divine priorities.

Our Lord Jesus insisted on this again and again. We too often fail to put first things first, to recognize the importance of honoring God above everything else. We fuss with one another and we allow all kinds of trivial things to come in to destroy our fellowship with each other. We take offense and bear grudges and then wonder why our prayers are not answered and why we miss the blessing of God in our lives. The Lord Jesus said, "If you come to the altar and remember your brother has aught against you, first go and be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer thy gift." That is the law of divine priorities. First get right with men in order that you may be right with God.

Again, in the matter of judging our brother, we are told in the Word of God to judge ourselves, and we are warned against judging others; yet we generally reverse this. We are so busy judging others that we do not have time to judge ourselves, The Lord Jesus said, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:1-3). The verse might be rendered, "Why beholdest thou the splinter that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the log that is in thine own eye?" When we get before the mirror of God's Word, we can see clearly to get the log out of our own eye, and then we may decide that after all there was no splinter at all in our brother's eye. The fault was entirely with us.

Sometimes we hear preachers criticizing the efforts of others; church workers, Sunday-school workers, gospel singers belittle those engaged in similar services. They can see no value in what others are attempting to do for Christ. No wonder there is so little blessing in their own ministry. If we have the glory of our blessed Lord before us, we shall not be judging and finding fault with those who are preferred before us, but rather we shall obey the word that says, "In honor, preferring one another." Christ must have the priority in our lives if we are to be vessels unto honor, sanctified and meet for the Master's use.

Paul was overjoyed at the response of the churches of Macedonia when he sought to raise funds for ministering to the famine-stricken believers in Judaea. He says, "They first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the will of God." There you have the recognition of divine

priorities. These Macedonian believers said, as it were, "All we have and are belongs to Christ, and therefore to you as His representative. Now tell us what to do, and we will gladly obey." If the people of the United States are willing to do without many things in order to win this war, surely we as Christians should be more than willing to let God have His way in our lives in order that we may get the gospel out to a lost world.

Remember, too, the word of the Apostle Paul in regard to Christian young people. Many of them are serving the Lord faithfully and endeavoring to do His will, but, sad to say, there are many others who do not give God His rightful place in their lives and yet make a great profession. The Word says, "Let them first learn to show piety at home" (1 Timothy 5:4). Some can be very pious at church but very thoughtless at home. Some are very pleasant when out in company, but they can be so unpleasant in the bosom of their own family, where, above all places, they should be shining for Christ. I know it is true that often the home is the place where we seem to get the fur rubbed the wrong way: When one young girl said to an evangelist, "I find it so hard to live for God at home; they always rub the fur the wrong way," he answered, "Well, my dear young sister, why not turn around?" That is, just give way and do not fight back, and you will be surprised to find how easy it is to get along.

Christianity is not just repeating John 3:16 or Acts 16:31; it is yielding the heart and the life to Christ. "For the time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that, obey not the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17). We are called to a life of devotedness. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." Recognize the divine priorities.

What is the real trouble in our country today? Is it not just this, that we have not given God His rightful place in our national life, and so His chastening rod is upon us? We have put money-making and pleasure-seeking first. We have said, "I want to live my own life," and the result has been ruin and disaster. Oh, for a national return to God and His Word, a recognition of the divine priorities!

Put first things first in your life. Give God the priority in your home, in connection with your talents, your service, everything that occupies you. If you thus seek Him first, He guarantees to stand back of you and never let you fall. Recognize the divine priorities and you will enter into a life of blessing such as you have never known before.

2. The Saviour's Touch

There are six beautiful word-pictures, all emphasizing in different ways the effect of the touch of the hand of the Lord Jesus, that I desire to dwell upon.

The first one is found in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 7, reading from verse 11 through verse 15:

“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”

The life-giving touch of Jesus! This young man, literally dead, pictures, untold thousands of young men and young women throughout this and other lands today who are just as truly dead toward God and dead to all things spiritual as he was dead physically to the things of this world, But our Lord Jesus Christ who brought life to the dead when He was here on earth, who touched that bier and then spoke the word of life that restored that young man to his mother, is still working in the same wonderful way. You remember He has said, “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.” We Christians were once dead in trespasses and in sins, but Jesus came and put forth His hand and touched us in our dead condition. He spoke the word of life, and that word we heard even when we were dead, and it brought us to life, and today we can rejoice that we have life in Christ.

It is not very flattering to men and women, to tell them that they are spiritually dead, when most of them feel that they are so thoroughly alive, but you remember we read in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, verse one: “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins: wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world.” This young man could not walk. He was utterly dead as to the body. But there are thousands all about us who are dead, and yet they are walking about. They are dead to God; they have no thought of pleasing Him; they have never known the power of God in their lives. Some of them are very religious, but religion and salvation are quite different. They do not know Christ, and the Scripture says, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” But, thank God, He came to bring life, and “today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” but “believe and your soul shall live.”

I like to think of the blessed Lord moving about among people and, unseen, waiting for anyone anxious to know Him, anyone anxious to find life, and being ready to put forth His hand in grace, for the touch of His hand and the word of His voice give life. I ran across this verse in a newspaper column, a strange place to find something so precious:

“The hands of Christ seem very frail,

For they were broken by a nail;
But only they reach heaven at last
Whom those frail, broken hands hold fast.”

Those hands were broken on Calvary when He hung there, a bleeding victim between earth and heaven, giving His life for us, and now those hands placed in blessing upon those who look to Him give life—life to all who believe.

Now, let us notice a second picture. It is in Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 8. It illustrates the touch of cleansing. We read in verses 1 to 3:

“When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.”

It is not only true that men are dead in sins and need life. It is also true that they are responsible beings before God and have been rendered utterly unclean by sin. Leprosy is God’s awful picture of sin—that terrible disease which may be working in the system for a long time before it is manifested outwardly. A man is not a leper because he has certain ugly sores somewhere upon his body. He has those sores because he is a leper. And a man is not a sinner simply because he does wrong, because he sins against God and his fellow man. A man does wrong things because he is a sinner. He is constitutionally a sinner. And just as leprosy makes a man utterly unclean, so that he has to be put away from the company of his fellows, so sin makes a man so utterly unclean that he cannot have any place in the city of God, for “there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth.” One might cry, “How, then, can I ever enter that city? What possible hope is there for me?”

“Tell me what to do to be pure
In the sight of all-seeing eyes.
Tell me, is there no thorough cure,
No escape from the sins I despise?
Will my Saviour only pass by,
Only show how faulty I’ve been?
Will He not attend to my cry?
May I not this moment be clean?”

Yes, there is cleansing for all in the precious blood of Christ. There is cleansing in the touch of His hand. The leper came fearful and yet hopeful, too, crying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” And Jesus immediately replied, “I will be thou clean,” and He touched him and the leprosy departed from him. If any other man had touched that leper, that man himself would have become unclean and would have had to go to the priest and present himself for cleansing. But when Jesus

touched the leper, instead of being defiled by the uncleanness of that poor, wretched man, His touch gave life and healing and cleansing. Thank God, today He is still the healing Christ, the cleansing Christ. You who have been living away from Him do you feel utterly unclean and unfit for God's presence? Look up to the blessed Lord, then, as that leper did, and let your heart cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean"; and He will answer. He will say to you as He said to him, "I will; be thou clean," for His touch is the touch of cleansing.

A third picture is found in the same Gospel, in the seventeenth chapter. The disciples were on the mountain with the Lord Jesus Christ. They were in the presence of His glory. He was transfigured before them:

"His face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (vs. 2-8).

This was one time while our blessed Lord was here on earth that the glorious deity enshrined within His humanity shone out through His very body, and He became radiant before His disciples. As they saw Him there with Moses and Elias, they were thrilled. They did not know what to do. It was such a remarkable thing! And Peter, who was always blundering, always anxious to do something and so often doing the wrong thing, always anxious to say something and so frequently saying the things he should not say—Peter looked up and said, "Lord, let us build three tabernacles here; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." It was as though he would put the representative of the law and the representative of the prophets on a level with the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father would not have that. A cloud shut out the two Old Testament men, and the voice of the Father was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." The disciples were so stirred and they were so awed as they heard that voice coming from the cloud that they fell upon their faces in fear. They felt they were too close to God, I think, to be comfortable, and they were filled with dread; but Jesus put forth His hand and touched them and said, "Arise, and be not afraid." And He lifted them up and they stood before Him in by and confidence.

How often we, too, are filled with fear as we contemplate the ways of God. There are so many things that we cannot understand. We sometimes look forward to the future with dread, or the present hour is filled with fear; but the Lord Jesus is here with every one of His own—here to put forth His hand, to say, "Be not afraid." It is the touch of assurance. Are you trembling in fear? Perhaps circumstances have come into your lives that seem literally to overwhelm you. How many breaking hearts there are! How many homes broken by death! How many others have answered the call to the colors, and parents and dear ones are asking, "Will they ever come back?" and their hearts are filled with fear. If you only know the Lord Jesus Christ, you have One with you who can make up for everything else, and He reaches forth and puts His hand on your troubled head and

says, "Fear not; be not afraid." Trust Him, No matter how dark the clouds may be above, be assured of this: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

But now a fourth picture, and this one in the ninth chapter of Matthew's Gospel. This is the actual scene that was before the mind of the hymn writer, though he used it as given in another Gospel, when he wrote the hymn, "Jesus of Nazareth Passeth By." We read in verses 27 through 30:

"And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou son of David, have mercy on us. And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it."

Another thing that sin does for us: it blinds our eyes. You know our eyes are really in our hearts when it comes to spiritual things. We read of the unsaved that their hearts are blinded and their understanding is darkened. They cannot see; they cannot understand. But Jesus comes to open blind eyes, and how many there are who could testify that when they were blind, blind to the things of God, blind to the things of eternity, they met with Him!: They heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, and they came to Him as these blind men came, crying, "Lord, that we might receive our sight," and He touched their eyes and they were able to see. Some of us remember when we had eyes for the things of the world but no eyes whatever for the things of God "till grace our blinded eyes received, Christ's loveliness to see." Have you known the touch of the Saviour's hand upon your eyes, opening your eyes and giving you to see spiritual realities?

A fifth picture is found in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 22, and this I think of as the corrective touch, for sometimes you know it is in the hand of the Lord that has to put right some of the things that we put wrong. Jesus had risen from His knees in the garden of sorrow and had gone to find that His disciples were still sleeping.

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant, of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him" (vs, 47-51).

This man was one of His enemies, but the heart of the Lord Jesus went out to Him in compassion. Peter had made the same mistake that so many other servants of Christ make. We want to help men, to bring blessing to them; we want them to hear the word of God, and yet we go about things in such a crude way. We cut off their ears and yet expect them to hear us. I cannot imagine Peter going to that man and asking him if he had put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. I think Malchus would look at him and say, "You come to talk to me about that You, the man who cut off my ear!"

We are often like that, and we hurt our own testimony. But our blessed, understanding Lord often corrects our failures; and so here you have the corrective touch. He reached forth His hand and touched the ear of Malchus and him in a moment. What a wonderful thing it is to realize that, after

all, the final word is not with the servants of Christ but with the Master of the servants. He so often overrules our failures and our blunders and brings blessing out of that which otherwise would be a means of sorrow and disappointment.

Our last picture is found in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 8, verses 14 and 15:

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."

I think of this as the quieting touch. You know the restlessness of fever. I can imagine Peter's wife's mother there, tossing about upon that couch, so troubled, so distressed, probably with a terrible ache in her head and her nerves all upset and the fever burning in her body. Jesus came, and they said, "Mother is sick. Will you go in and see her?" and Jesus went in, and there she lay—troubled, distressed, tossing about. Jesus touched her hand and the fever left her.

Everything becomes quiet and restful when you feel the touch of His hand. Sometimes we Christians are just like Peter's wife's mother. We, too, become so feverish and so overwrought and so upset, and we get worried and anxious and perplexed, and instead of improving things, it only makes them worse. But when Jesus Himself comes, when you feel the touch of His hand, then all the distressing circumstances seem to disappear. "He touched her hand and the fever left her."

Do you know this blessed Saviour? Do you know the One of the life-giving touch and the touch of cleansing and assurance and the illuminating touch and the corrective touch and the restful, quieting touch? Do you know Him? He has said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." If you have never come to Him before, won't you turn to Him now?

3. Fools: Wise and Otherwise

I AM going to ask your attention to two passages of Scripture, as I begin this message. We may turn to a number more as we go along. In the book of Proverbs, chapter ten, the last part of verse twenty-one, we read: "Fools die for want of wisdom."

And then in First Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 18: "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

These verses may seem almost paradoxical, but in the one instance God is speaking from the divine standpoint when He uses the word fools. "Fools die for the want of wisdom." A fool is an unthinking, a thoughtless, a careless person, a person without true understanding— in plain English, a "simpleton." And God says these fools die, die in their sins, die under the divine judgment for want of wisdom.

In the other passage the word fools is used from the standpoint of ungodly men who look upon those who have been awakened by the Spirit of the Lord and who have turned to God in repentance and have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, as though they were the fools. We know that is a very common thing in this world. We have seen people living in all kinds of sin, ruining their own lives and wrecking the happiness of others. Then when they came to Christ and everything was changed and they lived new lives to the glory of God, unthinking, godless worldlings dubbed them fools. And God says, as it were, "If you are looking at it from this standpoint, if any among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." So there are unwise fools, and there are wise fools! There are fools for the devil, and there are fools for Christ's sake.

I was on a ferryboat going from Oakland to San Francisco with a group of Christians. Among us was a dear friend of mine who played an English concertina. Our little group sat together in one corner and he played and we joined in singing. I even joined in myself, which is a very rare thing! But we were all enjoying the singing, till a man came up in a perfect rage, and said: "What do you mean, you fools, singing religious hymns here on the ship?" My friend was an Irishman and he jumped right up and said: "We are fools for Christ's sake; whose fool are you?" The man looked at us and ran. He wasn't waiting to hear any more.

That is the question I would like to ask you. A lot of us through infinite grace are fools for Christ's sake. We are content to be counted fools by the world who rejected our Saviour. But those whom the world counts fools, God counts wise. Whose fool are you? Are you a fool for the devil, or are you a fool for God? It is very interesting to run through the Word and trace out many different kinds of fools for the devil of which we read in the Bible. In fact, there are so many of them I wouldn't dare take time tonight to refer to them all. But there are seven that came especially before me as I was threading my way through the Book.

There is the atheistic fool of whom we read in the fourteenth Psalm and the first verse: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God," There are a great many people who take that position,

and they imagine they are very wise because they come to the conclusion that there is no God. But the Bible does not mince matters concerning these people. God says that people who say there is no God are fools, just imagine anyone with common sense going out at night and looking up into the starry heavens, or in the daytime gazing upon the sun and the marvels of this world, and then saying there is no God! How did it all come into existence then? Can you conceive of a universe without a mind, an intelligent mind, behind that universe? "He that formed the ear, shall he not hear, and he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" Surely. The wise in heart know there is a God, and He has spoken to them not only in creation but in His holy Word. If you deny the existence of God, don't pride yourself on your culture. Don't pride yourself on your intelligence. Don't pride yourself on your understanding. God calls you a fool. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

Then in the first chapter of the book of Proverbs and the seventh verse we read of another kind of a fool, though he is very closely allied to this one. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." That is the ignorant fool. God has spoken in His Word. He has given instruction here in His blessed Book. He has shown us the path of life, He warns of judgment to come, He tells us plainly the way of salvation, and men turn away with a sneer and they say, "I don't believe that book. I don't understand it anyway!" And they are only telling us what they are. God calls them fools! "Fools despise wisdom and instruction." If you have never given heed to the wisdom and instruction God has given in His Word, then this is His name for you tonight, a fool. I have no right to call you that. The Lord. Jesus has told us that we are not to call one another fools. He said, "Whosoever calleth his brother a fool is in danger of hell fire." So I wouldn't dare use that name for you, but I am telling you what God says about you. He Himself who reads the hearts of men says, if people despise His Word, if they despise wisdom and instruction, they are simply fools.

Closely linked with this, we have the opinionated fool, the fool who will not learn anything because he is not teachable. Proverbs 12:15 says: "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise." He is not ready to listen, he is not willing to learn. He understands, he has investigated, and he has come to a conclusion, and he is absolutely certain that his way is right and yet he is living in disobedience to the Word of God! This opinionated fool is shutting his eyes to the great realities of eternity as set forth in the Holy Scriptures. He is a bigot and a fool. God says so.

Then we have, in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Proverbs and the ninth verse, the mocking fool. "Fools make a mock at sin." Did you ever see a fool like that? When the man of God dwells upon the exceeding sinfulness of sin, when the one whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit recognizes the awfulness of sin against a Holy God, fools mock and jeer. They revel in iniquity "as if sin were sin no longer and life were no more vanity." One shudders today when he hears young people, young men and young women, some scarcely out of their teens, some, in fact, still in their teens, mocking and sneering in regard to things that a generation ago people thought of most seriously. Nothing is sacred any more, and these poor young fools, as God's Word designates them, mock at everything pure and everything holy. They ridicule the boy or girl or man or woman who seeks to stand against the abounding temptations of the day. They scoff and sneer if you point out that this or that course of conduct is sinful and wicked in the sight of God. They imagine they are showing their brilliance, their smartness, when thus they mock at sin. God says, Oh, no,

they are just telling out what is in their hearts. It is fools that make a mock at sin, not wise men.

There is a fool of whom we read in the tenth chapter of the book of Proverbs that comes home rather close, I am afraid, to some folks. The eighteenth verse of the tenth chapter of Proverbs: “He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.” I wonder if any of us are fools like that! “He that uttereth a slander is a fool.” We know it is not very nice to repeat evil tales about people, but I wonder if we ever faced what God says about this thing of uttering slander. “He that uttereth a slander, is a fool.” They that pass along an evil story about others, malign their character, seek to wreck their reputation, may think themselves abounding in smartness, but God says they are fools. “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.” It finds us out just where we are, and it doesn’t mince matters. It calls us by our names and enables us to realize what God thinks of us.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke’s Gospel there is a sixth character. In this instance our blessed Lord was actually speaking to believers. Sometimes real believers can do and say very foolish things. He says in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke and the twenty-fifth verse: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” This is the unbelieving fool, the fool who has the Word of God in his hand, who reads its testimony and yet who refuses to believe it. The blessed Lord designates such a one as a fool, or simpleton.

There is just one other of these characters that I will take time to notice, and that is the covetous fool of whom we read in the twelfth chapter of Luke’s Gospel. In verse 16 we are told that the Lord spake a parable unto them saying:

“The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and Build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?”

And now listen— “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (vs. 16-21). So our Lord tells us that every man and every woman who is more concerned about getting some of this world’s goods, about getting along in life, about making money: about having a nice home, about enjoying the abundance of good things that money will provide, than he is about eternal things, is a fool. He who is not concerned about the home in heaven, who is not concerned about riches that never fail, who is not concerned about laying up treasure! where moth and rust doth not corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal, is a fool.

I have often told the story, and you have often heard it, of the king’s fool. In the oldest days a king had in his court a jester. And this court jester was such an amusing comedian that on one occasion the king handed him a rod and said: “Look, I want you to take that. It is my scepter. I am giving it to you because you are the biggest fool I have ever seen in all my life. I want you to take that and if you ever find a bigger fool than yourself, give it to him.” You remember the story, how years went by, and one day a messenger came to the poor fool to say to him, “The king is dying, and he would like to see you before he dies.” And the poor fool got the rod and went to see his

master, The master said, "Fool, I am going on a long journey, a journey from which I shall never return. I have called you here to say farewell to you." And the fool looked at him and said, "You are going on a long journey; I suppose then you have made inquiry about the place to which you are going and about the conditions that prevail there and that you have made proper preparation for it." "No," said the king, "I have been so busy I haven't had any opportunity or inclination to pay any attention to the life beyond the grave or to prepare for it. I am going on this long journey, but I don't know where I am going." The fool looked at him for a moment and then handed him the rod and said, "Take it. Take it. You gave this to me long ago, because you said I was the biggest fool you had ever known, and you told me to keep it until I found a bigger fool than myself. A man who is going on a journey from which he will never return and doesn't even take the trouble to find out anything about the place where he is going, who is indifferent to his future and the condition of his soul, is a bigger fool than I am, for I have given attention to these things. Take the rod!"

Who can be a greater fool than the man who thinks only of feathering his nest for time, of getting along in this poor world, and forgets the eternity that is yet to come?

One day a young woman in a pensive state of mind was walking through a conservatory looking at the beautiful flowers, and she took a card out of her purse and wrote a few lines on it.

"To think of summers yet to be

That I am not to see.

To think a weed is yet to bloom

From dust that I shall be!"

She laid it down by one of the plants and went on. A little later somebody else picked it up and wrote a few lines on the other side. The lines he wrote were these:

"To think when Heaven and earth have fled,

And time and seasons o'er,

When all that can die shall be dead

Then I shall die no more!

Oh, what will then my portion be?

Where shall I spend eternity?"

Oh, the folly of the man and the woman who are indifferent to the consideration of their eternal destiny! Dear unsaved one, if tonight the same voice that spoke to the covetous fool of old were to say to you in silence and the darkness: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee," what would you have to say for yourself? You know better. You know that Christ has died. You know there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shun. You know that God has provided salvation for you, and you have neglected it. God calls the man or woman who does that a fool.

But now we have the other side. We are told that "the preaching of the cross," which is God's only remedy for sin, "is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of

God.” And the Apostle Paul says that which the world counts folly we have rested our souls upon, and if any man desires wisdom, let him take his place in identification with the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter what the world thinks of Him, and he will be assured of that wisdom which cometh down from above and which guarantees an eternity of bliss. So he says, “We are fools for Christ’s sake.” We are willing for the world to look upon us as out of our minds, we are willing that we be accounted as the very offscouring of the earth because we have turned to Christ, whose precious blood alone can save.

I remember years ago when I was a young Salvation Army officer, we were conducting an open-air meeting, and a man stepped out and told how he had been a drunkard, how he had been down in the depths of sin, and how God in grace had spoken to his soul in the Salvation Army hall, and he, penitent and broken, had yielded himself to Christ and trusted Him as His Saviour. He told how Jesus had given him a new life and a new nature, and now everything was different. As that dear man was giving his testimony, urging others to come to Christ, a very well-dressed man in the audience who looked as if he ought to have known better, stepped forward and cried, “Wake up, old man, you are asleep, you are dreaming! There is nothing in it! Wake up!” A little girl ran through the crowd and caught the man by his coat and said: “Please, sir, don’t wake him up! Sir, don’t wake him up!” The man looked at her and said, “What do you mean?” “Don’t wake him up. That is my daddy, and before he went to sleep like this, he was such a bad daddy. He was drunk nearly all the time and he beat Mama and beat me and we never had enough to eat. But since he began to dream like this everything is different. Now he is so kind, so good, and we have all that we need at home. Please don’t wake him up!”

In the eyes of the worldling that man was a fool.

But he was a fool for Christ’s sake, and he had the wisdom that cometh down from above. Friend, face it honestly for yourself. Are you one of the devil’s fools? Or are you willing to be a fool for Christ’s sake? Are you going on denying God and rejecting His testimony and priding yourself that you don’t need to be instructed by the Word of God, living in self-righteousness and in covetousness and in unbelief? Or do you know Christ as your own personal Saviour? Oh, if you have never known Him before, you can know Him now. I would like to introduce you to Him. I would like to take you by the hand and bring you face to face with our blessed Saviour. I would like to hear you say to Him: “Lord Jesus, I am coming to Thee as a poor sinner; and if Thou canst do for me what Thou hast done for thousands and millions of others, I am ready to trust Thee tonight.” He will take you up in grace and make you a new creature and deliver you from your sins and your folly, and He will give you the true wisdom that comes from above. The world will dub you a fool. The world will think perhaps that you are out of your mind, but you will know that you have the wisdom that is given by God Himself.

4. Cleaving to the Lord

“Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch, Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord,”—Acts 11:22, 23.

THE background and context of these verses is intensely interesting. Some years had elapsed since the glorious Pentecostal outpouring when the work of grace began in the city of Jerusalem. Our blessed Lord had instructed His disciples to begin there and go throughout Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth, proclaiming the wondrous story of His salvation; but, somehow, His disciples were very slow when it came to obeying the Word. They lingered in Jerusalem and Judea. One at last had faith enough to go to Samaria and was followed by two of the apostles, but there the work seemed to stop. They seemed not to have the spiritual energy to reach out among the Gentiles. So God shook them up. Persecution broke out, as a result of which the Christians were scattered. They went everywhere preaching the Word, but even then they preached only to Jews. Finally, some went as far as Antioch and launched out in a Gospel campaign among those called, in our Authorized Version, the “Grecians.” Ordinarily, the Scriptures distinguish between “Greeks,” the Gentiles, and “Grecians,” the term used for the Jews born among the Gentiles. They were Greek-speaking Israelites and were characterized by many of the mannerisms of the Gentiles. That is the word used here in the Authorized Version, but actually, according to the best texts, it should be translated “Greeks,” for these Jewish believers went to the Gentiles and preached Christ to those in Antioch who had been before worshipers of idols. The great work of God continued. It went on for months, and a great many were saved. Word of this great ministry was carried back to Jerusalem, and when the brethren heard about it they said, “We had better investigate. If God is working this way among the Gentiles, we had better find out.” So they sent Barnabas, and when he saw for himself the evidence of the grace of God working among the Gentiles, his soul was stirred and he began to exhort and try to help those who were already saved, telling them that with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord.

Now this verse came to me as I thought of the many who have had their hearts opened to their need of Christ and have trusted Him as their Saviour. We would not have you think conversion is actually the end of the Christian experience—it is only the beginning. When people come to Christ and put their trust in Him, that is just the start in the Christian life. When we receive the Lord Jesus we are born again but are only babes in Christ and need to grow. Certain things are important in the nurture of a babe—proper care, good food, constant cleansing, and fresh air. A great many things are required that the babe may develop and grow in a way that will cheer the hearts of the parents, relatives, and friends.

So, often, people are converted in great revival meetings, and years go by and they seem not to develop as Christians should, and unthinking people turn and blame the evangelist, saying, “People get converted but do not get anywhere or amount to anything for God,” That is true if the

converts are not built up in Christ afterwards, Barnabas realized that and went among these young converts and exhorted them, that “with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”

That is the exhortation we would bring to all today who have recently accepted Christ. We plead with you for your own soul's blessing that you cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart. You have trusted Christ, have taken Him as your own personal Saviour. Now see to it that you set your mind on the work of glorifying God in everything. You could not be saved through any effort of your own, but now that you are saved it is necessary for you to put forward every effort you can to glorify Him. If you have been born again you have been bought with a price. The Apostle Peter wrote:

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass; and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever, And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

Salvation does not depend on a happy feeling or an emotional upset or signing a card or holding up your hand or rising from your seat and going to the inquiry room. All these things are right and proper in their places, but new birth depends upon having received the word of the truth of the Gospel. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,” and that Word speaks to the conscience, and the power of the Holy Ghost produces new life. If you believe the Gospel you begin as a babe in Christ. As a babe, you need food. You need with purpose of heart to acquire that food which will be for your spiritual nourishment and upbuilding. The Apostle Peter's first letter, chapter 2, opening verse, reads, “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”

You will never grow, you will never make progress, you will never really develop as a Christian if you neglect your Bible. With purpose of heart cleave to the Lord and let one evidence of your cleaving be that from now on you will never permit a day to go by that you do not spend some time over your Bible. And as you open it, lift your eyes to Him who wrote it (for “Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”) and ask God to reveal His mind and will to you in His Word, and seek grace to walk in obedience to His will. There is no other way to make a success of the Christian life. Back in the Old Testament, in the book of Joshua, there is a verse I like to give to young converts, “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” (Josh. 1:8). There you have it! You want to make your way prosperous? You want to have good success? You want your Christian life to count for God? Then do not neglect your Bible!

Some of you may say, “I have never been in the habit of reading the Bible. I do not know how to go about it. Frankly, there is so much in it I don't understand,” Of course not! You can expect that in a book from God. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:2). But remember God, who wrote it, has given you the Holy Spirit. “After that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13). The Holy Spirit has come to dwell in you. You who have trusted Christ, your body is now the temple of God and the spirit of God delights to take the things of God and show them to you. As you open your Bible, look up to Him and say, “I do not understand it all; but, Lord, by Thy

Holy Spirit open it up to me,” and you will be surprised how He will delight to do it.

Some of you may say, “Shall I take it as a whole or by certain sections?” I think if I were you I would begin immediately to read thoughtfully, prayerfully, through the Bible—from the first chapter in Genesis to the last chapter in Revelation, Perhaps take a chapter a day—it takes only a few minutes; and then after you read it, pray over it and look it over again and say, “What in this chapter is for me, what speaks to my own heart?” If you do not find something, look to the Lord to open it up, wait on Him. Perhaps He will answer another question. Ask Him or yourself this question, “In what way is Christ presented?” Take the first chapter of Genesis you are reading through. You ask, “In what way is Christ presented?” The first chapter says, “Let there be light.” Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” You read God made the sun and Jesus is called the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). So wherever you go in your Bible you will always find something speaking of Him. Then look it over and say, “Is there anything here I should be careful to avoid or obey or against which I am warned? Is there anything God is showing me I ought to do?” So read your Bible, chapter by chapter, and you will find the more dependent you are on the Holy Spirit, the more it will open up to you.

I would like to suggest this to you. Besides reading through chapter by chapter, I think it will be a wise thing for you who have only recently accepted the Lord to take a book like the Gospel of John and read a chapter of that each day, because you know John’s Gospel was given especially to make known the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. “These are written,” John tells us, “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (20:31). You will find wonderful truths which will make the things of God more and more real.

Then if you are able to set apart three periods a day, may I suggest another book. You want to learn to pray and praise. Read one of the Psalms daily and meditate on that Psalm. Ask the Spirit of God to open it up to you. I can promise you this, in a few weeks and months, though you may not realize it, others will see you are growing and developing as a Christian.

A second thing, you not only need to read your Bible in order to grow in grace and knowledge, but you need to set apart some time daily for prayer. Let me read a passage from Paul’s epistle to the Philippians, chapter 4, verse 6, “Be careful for nothing [that may be translated, “Be not anxious about anything.” It is natural for us to be anxious. There are so many things to worry and distract us]; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” And then he promises that “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Now, you can be a Christian without giving yourself to a life of prayer, but you will never be a growing, healthy, useful Christian if you neglect prayer; and so I would urge upon you that with purpose of heart you cleave to the Lord in prayer—that just as you set aside a certain time every day for reading the Word, so, in connection with it, you take time to pray. Some of you may say, “I do not know how to pray.” Perhaps you have not prayed since as a child you said, “Now I lay me down to sleep.” Perhaps you were never even taught that. May I suggest, you could not find a better model than that given by our Lord in what is commonly called the Lord’s Prayer. Until you can pray at liberty yourself, until the Holy Spirit opens your heart and lips so you can pour out your soul in intercession, take those words as a guide in prayer. He said, “When ye pray, say, Our

Father.” it is a wonderful thing to be able to say that. You who have accepted Christ, only now do you have the right to say that. You may have used the words before but now you are entitled to pray and say, “Our Father.” As you think of that it would be well to say, “God is my Father—and just as I go to my earthly father and tell him what is in my heart, so I can tell Him how I long to live for Him, how I want guidance and help along the way, and the supply of my temporal and spiritual needs, for He says, ‘Be not anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.’”

“Hallowed be thy name.” That is, He would have you enter into a spirit of worship and adoration as you come into His presence.

Pray for the extension of His work. “Thy kingdom come.”

Pray for temporal things. “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Pray for deliverance from trial and temptation. “Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.”

And I would suggest that you accustom yourself to praying out loud when you get alone in your room where nobody will hear but God and you. Half of the victory in your prayer life is gained when you become accustomed to hearing your own voice. Many people cannot pray in public, because they have never become accustomed to hearing their own voices. If you have liberty in praying in secret, you will soon have liberty in praying in public. Because your words seem crude and seem not to come all at once, do not discontinue praying. Continue to cleave to the Lord and you will find He will open your lips and heart and really teach you to pray.

The last thing I want to say to you is this: The one who bore your sins is not only your Saviour but is your Lord and Master. Therefore you must recognize the fact that you are no longer your own. Before you were saved, you did what you pleased and went where you liked. That should be over now. You should say, “I am not my own. I belong to another. I have been bought with a price. Therefore I must be careful where I go, I must be careful in choosing my companions. I am called to serve the Lord Christ.” In the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans there is a very important exhortation in the first verse:

“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 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.”

Do not be discouraged because you are not all you hope to be at the beginning. Do not be discouraged if you find old things tugging at your heart and you do not see the immediate will of God. As you become better acquainted with His Word and spend more time in prayer and walk with Him, the more clear all these things will become.

As young Christians you should also avail yourselves of the opportunity of coming together with the people of God, that you may get better acquainted with His Word. He wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth. He said, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is” (Heb. 10: 25) but to come together and wait upon God together “and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

So I can assure you of this—if in these things you with purpose of heart cleave to the Lord, your Christian life will bring joy and satisfaction, and you will be used in winning others to Christ.

5. Building God's House: A Missionary Address

I AM going to ask your attention for just a little while to an Old Testament passage, and perhaps at first sight you may not think of it as a missionary passage but I think you will soon see that it is. It is found in the book of Exodus in chapters 35 and 36.

We will read from chapter 35, verse 4:

“And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; gold, and silver, and brass.”

The Lord told Moses a number of other things to be used in building the tabernacle—and then in verse 10: “And every wise-hearted among you shall come, and make all that the Lord hath commanded; the tabernacle, his tent,” and so on.

Then in chapter 36, verses 1 to 7:

“Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the Lord put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the Lord had commanded. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the Lord had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it: and they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary, to make it withal. And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary, came every man from his work which they made; and they spoke unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much.”

I have always hoped that some day before the Lord takes me home to heaven, I might have the experience that Moses had there. It has fallen to my lot through the years to devote a great deal of time seeking to stir the hearts of God's people to recognize their responsibility to give toward the building of the house of God; but I have never yet come to the place where I had to be told by the deacons and church officers to tell the people that they had brought too much already—not to bring any more. It would be a delightful experience!

You will observe this Old Testament passage has to do with a subject very dear to the heart of God—the building of a house in which He was to dwell. I wonder if you have ever noticed that it takes two chapters in the Old Testament to tell the story of the creation of the universe. In Genesis you get the outline of the story and in chapter 2 God gives more detail, dealing more particularly with the creation of man. There is no contradiction, as some people imagine, They simply have not

apprehended what God is telling us. Those two chapters bring before us the whole story of the creation of the universe. When we come back to Exodus, we find it takes sixteen chapters to tell the story of the building of the sanctuary of Jehovah, the tabernacle that was set up in the wilderness. That tabernacle in the wilderness was a very modest building indeed; it would not in any way be compared, so far as size is concerned, with many of the great temples for religious worship that exist today, though because of the value of the metals used in its construction it was a most costly sanctuary.

There must be some reason why so much space is given to the instructions for this sanctuary. Well, you know God loves to dwell with His people, and Israel was no sooner out of Egypt than they were singing, "The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is his name. I will prepare him an habitation." God took them at their word and said, Yes, I want you to bring material, give your best and give willingly with a glad heart, to build a sanctuary that I may dwell among you. And that sanctuary in a wonderful way tells us the story of redemption. That is one reason it has so large a space in the Bible. I sometimes say I would be willing to rest the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible on the five books of Moses; particularly on what we read of the building of the tabernacle, its furnishings, and the ceremonies connected with it. All the New Testament rests on that. You cannot understand the New Testament and the story of redemption in Christ Jesus, you cannot understand the atonement and our Lord's sacrificial and high-priestly work unless you understand what God revealed to Moses concerning the construction of that "temple"—as it is called in Psalm 29:9. A better rendering would be "His sanctuary," for the temple was not built at that time. He was referring to that house of curtains which God owned as His sanctuary. We are told that every whit of it uttereth His glory, every detail of the sanctuary in the wilderness told out in some way the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. In the New Testament we find God referring to it again and again and showing us it was a type of the house in which He now dwells. Let me call your attention to two or three verses in the third chapter of Hebrews. Here the apostle shows how the glory of the Lord Jesus transcends by far the glory of Moses, the servant of God in the old dispensation. Verses 3 to 6 read, "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony [notice this, for a testimony] of those things which were to be spoken after, but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

What is the Holy Spirit telling us here? He is telling us the house of curtains built of old typifies the house of God in which He dwells by His Spirit today, whose house we are. That is, the house of God at the present time is not a house of stones, brick and mortar like this great building and many other similar buildings dedicated to the Lord, but the house of God is built of men and women saved by grace and brought into holy, happy fellowship by the indwelling Spirit of God. There are a great many people who profess to be Christians but prove their profession is not genuine for the Scripture reads, "whose house are we, if we hold fast ... firm unto the end." It does not do to profess to be a Christian and by and by turn away and deny the Lord who bought you. There are many who join the church, are baptized and whose after-life proves there was no genuine work of grace in the soul. When people are born again, they manifest the reality of that work by continuing steadfast in the faith, and those who thus prove to be truly born of God and are His regenerated

children constitute the house in which God now dwells,

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.”

You see, it is not complete yet; it has been in the course of construction 1900 years. When Peter made his great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” Augustine, of Hippo, has well said, “So then Christ, not Peter, is the rock upon which the Church is built.” And the foundation of that building was laid in the death of Christ on Calvary and ever since Pentecost God has been adding one and another to that building.

Here is where the missionary message comes in. That temple is nearly completed; it will not be long until the last piece of material will be set in place, and then the Lord will take the entire Church out of this world to be with Himself in yonder glory. Our business now is to be occupied with building that Church and going out after those who seem worthless, to go after those with whom it would seem nothing could be done; but whom, when they believe the Gospel, God in His matchless grace transforms and makes His own. The Apostle Peter said, “To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house.” And so it is our business, then, to go out and get the material to build living stones into that house.

If we are going out, as we have been commissioned to take the Gospel to others and carry on a great worldwide missionary program, conditions are such in this world that it demands constant sacrifice and self-denial. God told Moses to tell the people to bring in all that was needed for the construction of the house of God, but to tell them to bring with a willing heart. He did not want anything given grudgingly. He did not want a gift from those who said, “I hate to part with it, but I must keep up appearances.” Moses said, “We don’t want gifts from them. Those who give must give willingly.”

They came from all the families of Israel. Here comes a man with a talent of silver and puts it down, and here comes another man with a great purse of gold. Here is a poor woman who hadn’t much to give, but she sheared a couple of goats and wove the wool into part of a goat’s hair curtain. Here is one who can’t bring silver and gold but brings copper. I think he is in preeminence today. God has been using gold, silver and copper in the building of His work, and I think if you were to put it as Paul puts the three graces, you would say, “Now abideth gold, silver, copper; but the greatest of these is copper,” It is wonderful how much work of the Lord has been made possible by the people who were able to give only the copper; but God has been able to do what all the alchemists of the Middle Ages were not able to do—He has transmuted it into pure gold for His honor and glory.

They came and brought their gifts so gladly and of such quantity that the builders finally came in Moses and said, “We are swamped; we already have more than we need, you must tell the people to stop.” Just think of some church where one would have to meet the people at the door, crying, “Stop! don’t bring any more. We don’t know what to do with it.” Wouldn’t it be great! Well, dear friends, we have the privilege today of seeking to emulate those men of old.

God is still seeking materials for the building of His house. He wants redeemed sinners to be builded together for His dwelling-place. In order to reach them He requires men and money and it is our privilege to provide them. O for willing hearts to respond to the missionary call!

The dire need of the pagan world is in itself the Macedonian cry, imploring Christians to come over and help them, bringing to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death the light and liberty that only the Gospel can supply.

Thus new material will be builded into the house of God and the coming of the Saviour hastened. Even though we may not all be able to go out and seek for the lost we can all participate in the work. By prayer, by our gifts, as well as by our personal testimony, we can help to provide that which is necessary in order that the work may soon be completed.

6. Should Protestantism Be Liquidated?

RECENTLY, I saw it stated in a Roman Catholic periodical that it would hasten peace and make for a more settled order of society if Protestantism were liquidated. Practically all of our present international troubles were traced back to Martin Luther and the Reformation. I want to ask you to look with me into this question and see if the Romanist was right in his contention.

Let us read from the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, beginning with verse 11:

“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed,

“For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

“And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law,

“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

What “Protestant” Means

With these words before us, I want to try to speak to you tonight on the subject, “Should Protestantism Be Liquidated?” That term Protestantism is often used in a very loose and careless way. It is perfectly true that in the beginning it bore not only a religious but also a political significance. But we need to remember that in the times when the Protestant movement was first brought into being, Church and State were very intimately connected in every European country, so that it was almost impossible to protest against anything of a religious character without at the same time making a protest concerning things political. Evangelical believers were first designated Protestants in the year 1529 after a formal protestation had been handed in at what was called the Diet of Spire, when a great company of ecclesiastics met together to consider the Lutheran movement and what their attitude should be toward it, and a number of the German princes and the representatives of fourteen cities entered a protest to the Diet when they refused to consider the liberty of any German principality to rid themselves completely of Romanism and endorse the new evangelical program if they so desired. The Diet of Spire held that the mass must be everywhere recognized and that no German principality should be permitted any other form of religious service than that of the Roman Catholic except the few which had already become what we today call Protestant. They themselves were simply called evangelicals. But after putting in this protest, the name Protestant was applied largely by the Roman Catholic adversaries to the evangelical group. Eventually, however, they took it over for themselves for they felt there was something in the name which was worth preserving. They were protesting against certain great doctrinal principles and certain practices which they honestly believed to be contrary to the Word of God.

Protestantism Arose Because People Longed to Have Assurance of Salvation

Protestants accept, and always have accepted, all the great fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith which were preserved in the Roman Church down through the centuries, as well as in the Churches of the Last. Protestants hold to the doctrine of the Trinity, to the incarnation of the Son of God, to the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, to His physical resurrection, to His ascension to God's right hand in heaven, and to the fact that He is coming again as Judge of the quick and of the dead. In these doctrines Protestants and Catholics so-called are in unanimity. We who are called Protestants have nothing new to offer as to them. We maintain what the Church has maintained all down through the centuries. How, then, did the cleavage between the old church and the newer group come in? It was not the result, as some supposed, of the political upheavals in Europe, though these did come in connection with it; but it was the result of a widespread exercise among the common people of Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland and the Scandinavian countries as to how a troubled conscience could find pardon and peace and become sure of personal salvation.

Now I am not saying anything unkind in regard to our Roman Catholic friends or their views when I remark that there is no certainty of eventual salvation for anybody in the Roman Catholic church so long as he is in this life. For instance, when I was in Rome some time ago I found they were still celebrating masses for the repose of the soul of Pope Leo XIII. Now, Leo died a good many years ago. Many of us here who are middle-aged or older remember when he passed away. Nobody in the church of Rome knows today whether Pope Leo XIII is in heaven, in hell, or in purgatory; but they hope that he has at least gotten as far as purgatory. Masses are still being offered in the thought of getting him out of purgatory and eventually getting him into heaven. That is not a singular thing. Rome promises no assurance of salvation to anybody in this life.

In the little paper, *Our Sunday Visitor*, published by Bishop Noll, in the April 23 issue, 1939, are found these words:

"We do not know with certainty what the eternal destiny of any individual may be unless he is canonized by the church."

Of course, no individual is canonized by the church until he has been at least one hundred years dead, so that what I said in the beginning is true. Rome gives no assurance of personal salvation to anybody while he is still in this life.

You can take the history of a good Catholic—and I have great respect for my Catholic friends and I would not want to say one unkind thing about them, but they, of course, if they were speaking of my views, would feel free to point out what they thought was erroneous in them, and I feel free to do the same thing in regard to their views. But you take a person born into a good Catholic family. As a child, he is baptized and his baptism is supposed to deliver from the defilement of inbred sin. Suppose the child dies suddenly after baptism. I ask, "Has that little child gone to heaven?"

Nobody can tell me. Nobody knows for certain. But if he grows up, he is instructed in the teachings of the church and when he comes to the proper age and shows an understanding of the instruction received, he takes his first communion, and is confirmed into the membership of the church. He comes home from the first communion happy to have had that wonderful privilege. But I say to the officiating priest or I say to the parents, "Are you absolutely certain now that this dear child is saved, saved for eternity?" The answer is, "No, nobody can be sure of that."

What then? Well, the child is now called upon to persevere in good works, to be sure to make a good confession whenever he is conscious of having sinned, to do the prescribed penance put upon him, by the father confessor, to attend every church service he possibly can, and, above everything else, to be present at Easter time. And as he grows up from boyhood to young manhood and does all this, is he eventually certain of salvation? I have put the question definitely. I have often put it to Roman Catholic priests with whom I have been in conversation. I remember one answering me in the words of the Roman Catholic translation of the book of Ecclesiastes, "No man knoweth whether he is worthy of favor or hatred."

Well, suppose this person perseveres all through life. He is very faithful in walking according to the ordinances of the church. He is very regular in attending the sacrifices of the mass, receives the communion as frequently as he possibly can. Is he then sure of salvation? No, he is still left in absolute uncertainty. Perhaps he enters into the marriage relation. Marriage is called a sacrament and is recognized as lasting as life itself, and this person observes the rules of the church in everything in regard to marriage, and a father or a mother carries out to the end all that is required by church order and regulation. Again I put the question, "Is this person saved? Are you certain now that this person will spend eternity in heaven?" The answer is, "No, no, nobody can be sure."

Finally, this one comes down to death and a kindly, well-meaning priest is sent for and he gives the last rites of the church and perhaps lays a crucifix upon the breast of the departing one who breathes his last and goes out into eternity, and I turn to the officiating priest and say, "You are sure, aren't you, that this dear one has gone to heaven?" The answer is "No one can tell, nobody knows. Very few people in the hour of death are good enough for heaven. Many are too good for hell but too bad for heaven, and so there is a state called purgatory, in which they enter in order eventually to be cleansed, and friends are asked to pay for masses for their souls in order that they may pass from purgatory to heaven."

I have before me a little paper. It is a parish paper from one of the churches of this city. I won't mention which one, but I notice a little item in it of striking importance. It says:

"You are often wondering to whom to make a gift, and what to give. . . . But have you ever thought of sending a gift to the Poor Souls, to your friends and relatives still held captive in Purgatory? And yet, they are craving for something you can give to them: the soothing drops of Christ's precious Blood to extinguish the cleansing flames. This year, be resolved to include your beloved dead when you prepare your Thanksgiving and Christmas gifts. Have for them MEMBERSHIPS in the EUCHARISTIC WEEKS ASSOCIATION. There is no gambling, no insecurity, no loss in the investment we propose. The SHARES offered are drawn from the Eucharistic Treasury. Christ, the King, is the Banker: His Sacred Heart is inexhaustible. His generosity is infinite . . . The SHARES are the Poor Souls. Some of them are probably your actual creditors. They can do nothing to redeem themselves. Unless you pay off their debts of sin to God, they may have to stay a long

time in the fiery prison. . .”

Now. I did not write that. No Protestant critic of the Church of Rome wrote that. That is a statement in the parish paper, put out by a local priest, urging his friends, his members, his parishioners to do what they can, give of their money for masses in order, as he puts it in so many words, to redeem the Poor Souls in purgatory.

Well, after masses have been offered for years, I turn to the officiating priest as he comes down from the altar and I say, “Now, are these souls redeemed from purgatory? Are they in heaven at last?” He says, “No one knows, no one can know.” That was the best that the Church of the middle ages was able to give to anxious, troubled, conscientious, distressed men and women who were facing eternity. And they said, “We want assurance, we want to know for certain how a man may find peace with God: we want to know how one may be sure that his sins are forgiven, that he has life eternal, that he has been freed from guilt and that he is certain of going to be with God in heaven when death takes him from this world.”

It was the attempt to answer those questions from the Word of God that resulted in what has been called Protestantism. And there is as much need today as there was then for the testimony given in the sixteenth century in answer to those questions.

Protestantism Insists That Each Individual Must Come to God Directly Through Faith in Christ, the One Mediator, Not Through Priests, Pope, Mary, or the Church

What were the great doctrines that the Protestants affirmed and for which they have sought to stand throughout the centuries?

First of all, the soul's direct relation with Christ Himself. In other words, Luther, Calvin, Ecolampadius, all the great reformers, William Farel, and many others, some of whom laid down their very lives for the truth's sake, insisted on this, that the statement of Scripture as given in the First Epistle of Timothy, chapter 2, verses 5-6, be taken exactly as it stands, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

How can anyone, in the face of a Scripture like that, anyone who professes to believe that this blessed Book is the Word of the living God, believe in Mary or the saints as mediators? And mark you, our Roman Catholic friends profess to believe, just as truly as we Protestants, that this Book is the Word of the living God. They insist on it. We honor them for it. We insist on it, too. But they tell us we can understand the Word only as we read it in the light of the teachings of the church. But we turn to the Word and read this to them, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." It does not say, "Let him hear what the church says to him," but "what the Spirit saith unto the churches." God's Word is addressed to the churches of God and the churches of God are responsible to hear what is written in this Book.

One of the first fundamental statements is that which I quoted, "There is one mediator [only one], one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all." And therefore we, as Protestants, insist that each individual soul is responsible to God and must deal directly with our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. We search our New Testament in vain to find any intervening priestly class coming in between believers and the blessed Son of God Himself. There is not a shred of evidence in the New Testament that there was ever such a person as an officiating priest in the Early Church. There is no such word used. There is no such individual mentioned. But, on the other hand, all believers are called priests and that by the blessed Apostle Peter himself. Catholics tell us that Peter was the first pope, and that the pope speaks *ex cathedra*, with absolute authority. And the Apostle Peter, addressing all believers, calls them "a holy priesthood" and also "a royal priesthood." But Peter does not know anything, Paul does not know anything, no other New Testament writer knows anything of an intermediary class coming, in between people and God. Christ is the one mediator between God and man; not Christ's blessed mother, precious and wonderful as her life was. When our blessed Lord was here on earth, as He was on His way to the cross, an excited, emotional woman shouted out, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," that is, "Blessed be your mother," and Jesus said, "Rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." He would not have

anybody glorifying His mother and turning away from Himself. He alone is the mediator between God and men. There is no other.

The last recorded mention that we have of the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ is in the first chapter of the book of Acts and there we read that the disciples were gathered together for prayer in an upper room in Jerusalem with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with the women, the holy, godly women. Notice, they were not praying to Mary; they were praying with Mary. She knelt with them as on one common level, and together their prayers were going up to the Lord. That is the last mention of Mary, the mother of our Lord, in the Word of God. There is not another passage that refers to her in all the New Testament after that time. I know, of course, the application that is often made of that mystic woman in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, the woman who has a crown of twelve stars upon her head, the moon under her feet, and clothed with the sun, but as you study that, it would take a strange imagination to make that refer to the blessed virgin Mary. It refers clearly to the people of Israel. It is God's marvelous picture of the nation of Israel, of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God, blessed forever.

Shall we then as Protestants give up the great truth that we go to God directly through His Son? We cannot afford to do it. We dare not do it. We have found such joy, we have found such peace, we have found such blessed assurance in coming to Christ direct that we could not think of turning to any other, neither His mother, nor saints, nor a priesthood on earth. We will put no mediator between our souls and God save our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

Protestants Accept the Bible Alone as the Divine Revelation of God's Will: Not Church Traditions or Decrees of Church Councils or of Popes

As Protestants, we stand on the Bible. The Romanist says, "Well, the Bible can be understood only in the light of the teachings of the church." But we maintain that God gave the Bible in order to instruct the church. He gave it through holy, inspired men in order to show the church how to behave and to make clear to them what the truth of God really is. Letter after letter in this New Testament is addressed to one or another of the different churches. There is a letter to the church in Rome, two letters to the church in Corinth, a letter to the churches in Galatia, a letter to the church in Ephesus and so on. These messages to the churches contain the truth that we as Christians need to know and we take our stand upon the statement of Chillingworth of old in the seventeenth century who, when he was challenged as to the ground of authority as recognized by Protestants, said this, "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, is the religion of Protestants," We dare to stand on that. And we are sure of this, that God's Word will never fail us, because it comes from Him who is immutable.

We are told in 2 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Observe the Word of God; the Scripture is profitable for four things: "for doctrine"—for the unfolding of the divine truth; "for reproof"—to show where we are wrong; "for correction"—to show us how to get right; "for instruction in righteousness"—to show us how to keep right. And as we give heed to the Holy Scripture, not to the teaching of some body of men, however sacred their office may seem to be; as we give heed to the holy Scripture we may "become perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Evangelicals Believe Christ Was Sacrificed Once for All, and Need Never Be Offered Again

Perhaps the greatest cleavage between the Roman church and the evangelicals is that in connection with the sacrificial work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both, as I have said, believe in His atoning work, both believe that He offered Himself on the cross for sinners, but the great difference between the two is this: the one believes that although He offered Himself there on the cross for sinners, this is not enough to save souls, but there must be a continual unbloody sacrifice offered on Rome's altars day in and day out, year after year, for the sins of the living and of the dead and that only as men avail themselves of this constant sacrificing of Christ in the mass can they have some hope of eventual salvation; hope, not assurance, because, as I have said, nothing is known of assurance there.

But now I turn to the Word of God and what do I read? This is Hebrews 9:24-26:

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.”

What does that tell us? It tells us this, that Christ's one offering on Calvary's cross is all-sufficient to settle the sin question, that nothing can ever be added to it, nothing can ever be taken from it. It is not necessary that He should offer Himself often.

I was having a friendly talk with a priest one day, in Santa Barbara, California. He had come out of the monastery. Talking to him, I said:

“Do you officiate at the altar, at the sacrifices of the mass?”

“Yes.”

“And you affirm that when you officiate you offer up Christ for the sins of the living and the dead. Is that true?”

“Yes.”

“Our Bible says, ‘Without shedding of blood there is no remission.’ Do you believe that when you thus offer Him, it gives more efficacy to His blood?”

“Yes.”

“But it means, then, that you yourself immolate Him, you kill Christ afresh.”

“Oh. No.” he said. “It isn't that exactly. Christ is both offerer and sacrifice and in the person of the priest He offers Himself in the mass every time that sacrifice takes place.”

“Well, then,” I said, “explain this: ‘Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others’” (Heb. 9: 25).

He looked at me a moment and said, “Well. I don’t think we had better discuss it,” and he walked away.

There is God’s own word for it, that there is no other offering, no other sacrifice contemplated, no other atonement for sins possible. The one offering of the Lord Jesus has settled the sin question forever.

Salvation by Faith—The “Watchword of the Reformation”

The great text of the Protestant Reformation was that which is found in the Old Testament, in the book of Habakkuk and three times in the New Testament as though to draw special attention to it; in the Epistle to the Romans, in the Epistle to the Galatians, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews—“The just shall live by faith.” That text, I might say, was the mainspring of the Reformation, and it is the great truth that we are seeking to stress today, and we need to stress as long as there is a poor sinner seeking salvation. “The just shall live by faith.” “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” Paul said, speaking in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38, 39). Look at that. Through personal faith in the Lord Jesus one may be assured that his sins have all been forgiven and that he stands justified before God.

What is justification? It is the sentence of the judge in favor of the prisoner. And when man, a guilty sinner, comes before God and confesses his sin and puts his trust in the Lord. Jesus Christ, God says this man is justified. “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God” (Rom. 8:34). God will not hear one charge against the man who has put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

These are the great outstanding truths for which thousands upon thousands of men and women and even little children actually laid down their lives; and these are the truths for which Bible Protestantism stands today.

Should Protestantism be liquidated? Liquidated? That would mean throwing overboard all these precious truths! It would mean turning away from the simple Word of God, and putting our faith in the statements of men as fallible as ourselves. It would mean ignoring the one Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, and turning to lesser mediators. It would mean refusing to believe that by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified, and instead seeking salvation through many offerings that can never put away sin. It would mean endeavoring to save ourselves by works of righteousness that we might do, by human merit, by deeds of kindness, by charity, by reformation of life, by prayer, and supplications, by penances. And the Scripture declares that all these are but as dead works from which we have to turn in order that we may be saved by grace. Someone may say, “But don’t you believe in charity, don’t you believe in almsgiving, don’t you believe in reformation of life, don’t you believe in good works, in penitence for sin?” Yes, we believe in them all, but not as having anything to do with the salvation of our souls but rather the results, the effects of that salvation wrought in us by the Holy Ghost when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“I would not work my soul to save,

That work my Lord has done:

But I would work like any slave

For love to God's dear son."

The Joy of Resting on Christ's Finished Work

So I stand before you a confessed and a convinced Protestant and yet with a heart, I trust, filled with love for all my brethren who do not see as I see. I have no unkind thought for my friends in the Roman Catholic group or any other great groups who do not see these things. From the depths of my heart I long that they may be brought into the same joy and the same assurance that I have myself; for there is the wonderful thing about it: when you rest in the Word of God, you have absolute confidence. I have stood sometimes at the brink of the grave and I have watched many a Christian slip away into eternity and I have never known one who did not bear witness that all was well. And as they bade good-bye to friends on earth, they had the assurance that they were going out to be forever with the Lord. John Wesley said when people were criticizing his followers, "Well, the wonderful thing about Methodists is that they die well." And that is a great testimony. When one has risked everything on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then comes down to facing eternity, there is no fear, there is no dread, nothing but perfect rest and joy and assurance based upon the work of Christ.

As a dear man was dying he looked up and somebody said, "Well, is it all right with you." He said, "Yes, it is finished. Upon that I can hang my whole eternity." What did he mean? Christ on the cross finished the work that saves and he could risk his all on that, and he knew that all would be well forevermore.

"Upon a life I did not live,

Upon a death I did not die:

Another's life, another's death,

I hang my whole eternity."

if Christ fails me, then everything is lost. But if Jesus Christ abides, if He is the same yesterday, today and forever, then everything is well for eternity, for God in grace links up with Him all who put their trust in Him. I would not want to be without Him. I would not turn from Him to any church or any sacramental observances, to any ritualistic services, to any efforts of my own. I would not turn from Christ to trust in anything that might be presented for I find absolute satisfaction in Him, He has met every need of my soul and He has settled the sin question to the divine satisfaction. No, we will not attempt to liquidate Protestantism. We will go on preaching, in love and in the power of the Holy Ghost, as the Lord enables us, the blessed realities that were recovered for us at the glorious reformation through which all the centuries since, millions of people have found the full assurance of faith and trusted Christ alone and would not rest on church or sacraments for salvation. We stand today for these same precious things, and by the grace of God we will proclaim them as long as He gives life and strength.

7. The Humiliation of Christ

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

THE Epistle to the Philippians is one with which I am sure we are all very familiar. It is the epistle of Christian experience. It does not deal with the great and high doctrines of our Faith, yet there is a wonderful background of doctrine running all the way through as evidenced particularly in the passage I have just read. But in the Epistle to the Philippians the Spirit of God is dealing particularly with Christian experience, and this really consists of three things. First of all, the knowledge of Christ. Until one knows Christ he is not a Christian and until one becomes a Christian he cannot have a Christian experience. So it begins with the knowledge of Christ. Second, the enjoyment of Christ. No one has a true Christian experience who is not enjoying fellowship with the Lord Jesus. We realize at once that if that be true there are a great many experiences Christians have which should never be termed Christian experience. It is quite possible for Christians to be out of fellowship with their Lord and have very grievous experiences as a result, and those experiences should never be designated as Christian experiences. Third, the manifestation of Christ. We have real Christian experience only as Christ is seen in our lives, and that comes out very beautifully in this letter to the Philippians.

The epistle naturally divides into four parts, according to the chapters. In Chapter 1 the outstanding theme is Christ as the believer's life; in Chapter 2, Christ as the believer's example; in Chapter 3, Christ as the believer's object; in Chapter 4, Christ as the believer's strength and his all-sufficient supply. This letter is, if I may put it so, one of the most psychological of all the New Testament writings. I am using the term psychological as it is ordinarily used today. Psychology is supposed to be the science of the mind. In the Bible, psychology is connected with the soul instead of the mind, but I am using the word as we use it today. We have a great deal about the mind in the letter to the Philippians. Of course, when you consider Christian experience you have to take into account the activity of the mind.

In Chapter 1, where we have already said Christ set forth as the believer's life, we have linked with that the Gospel mind or evangelistic spirit. We who are saved are saved through the Evangel, that is, the Gospel. We believed God's good news about His Son. Many believed intellectually many years before they appropriated it for themselves, but when they risked everything for eternity upon His Word they received divine life. “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . and this is the word which by the gospel

is preached unto you.”

Having been saved through the Gospel, a Christian who is living in fellowship with his Lord must of necessity be concerned about getting that Gospel out to others. So the Apostle Paul wrote, “Only let your behaviour be as it becometh the gospel of Christ. . . that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” Are you evangelistically minded? Are you really concerned about getting the Gospel out to other people?

Real Christians are never satisfied with just going to heaven themselves—they want to bring as many with them as they can. That is the evangelistic spirit, the Gospel mind.

In Chapter 2 the apostle brings before us the lowly mind or humble spirit. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Pride, vanity, conceit, haughtiness—all that is contrary to the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ should never be found in Christians. Yet we all have to confess how we fail, how much pride we have hidden away, how much vanity, self-seeking----- but all these mar and destroy true Christian experience.

Then we turn to Chapter 3, where we have Christ as the believer’s object, and we have the steadfast mind. Everyone is called on to pursue without deviation the object before us—of someday becoming like Christ in glory. We say with the apostle, “Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” And he adds, “Let us therefore, as many as be mature, be thus minded” —a steadfast mind.

Chapter 4, which shows Christ as our strength and all-sufficient supply, stresses the importance of the trustful mind or confident spirit which enables one to say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

This is a wonderful letter. Four chapters teeming with precious things which, made your own by the power of the Spirit, will lead you on to a richer, deeper spiritual life.

But now in the verses I have read we have presented the Lord Jesus Christ as our pattern. See the depths of suffering into which He went and the heights of glory to which the Father has raised Him. I want you to consider these things with me, especially in view of the fact that we are going to observe the Lord’s Supper, remembering again our Saviour who took our place on the cross and who said, “This do in remembrance of me.” We not only remember the work He did. We love to dwell on that, but we also seek to be occupied with the Person who did the work. had He been any less than He was He would not have been efficient to atone for our sins. He had to be what He was in order to do what He did.

“No angel could our place have taken:

Highest of the high tho’ He,

The loved One on the cross forsaken

Was one of the God-head Three!”

The Apostle Peter says he was a witness of the suffering of Christ and a partaker of the glory to follow, We were not permitted. to stand by the cross and see what our Saviour underwent, but we

may in faith through the aid of the Holy Spirit stand by that cross and contemplate Him hanging there and dwell upon His suffering and sorrow, and it is good for our own souls that we do this. It was for our guilt that He was there upon that tree. Oh, surely, in view of Calvary we might well banish every hateful proud thought, everything like vanity or self-conceit! Surely these should have no place at His table!

Let us look at this passage. "Let this mind" —that is the lowly mind, the humble mind—it is distinctly called the mind of Christ. In the earlier part of the chapter the apostle besought the Philippians to be of one mind. How is it possible for people to be of one mind? Take a throng in a great church. They represent so many different nationalities; if you go back far enough, possibly even different races, different heredity; environment and cultural opportunities have been so different. How is it possible, then, for people who have had all these varied connections in the past and present to be of one mind? Of course, we will never look at everything the same way. We do not look at political problems or national problems the same way, much less all our spiritual problems. Nevertheless, if we all show forth the mind of Christ—all manifest that lowliness and grace seen in Him—we shall be of one mind. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" —that mind that led Him to come to earth for our redemption, to leave heaven's glory—"who subsisting in the form of God . . ." You could not find any stronger term. No angel subsisted in the form of God. No created being subsisted in the form of God. But Jesus, from all eternity, subsisted in the form of God. He was one with God the Father. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. It was robbery on the part of our first parents when they heeded the tempter, who told them, "Ye shall be as gods." They reached out to become as gods, and it was robbery—it was theft. But He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. When He said, "I and my Father are one" He was not vaingloriously aspiring to a place that did not belong to Him. He was declaring a self-evident truth. It might be translated differently. "He counted not equality with God a thing to be retained." He was always one with God but stooped to become a servant. He might have said, "There is no occasion for me to leave the place I have had with my Father from eternity, no occasion to go down and take the burden of guilty man's sin." But no, that would not be Jesus! He counted not equality with God a thing to be retained. He said, "I will give it all up—the glory I had with the Father before the world was—and I will go down to the lost world to settle the sin question for guilty men." "He made himself of no reputation!" How truly these words were fulfilled in the place He took on earth. Men treated Him with contumely. They said He was a devil and a Samaritan. There was nothing you could say of another that conveyed greater contempt. He took the lowest place. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." I was reading a book some time ago in which the writer used an expression I did not like, yet I realized how naturally one might use it if one did not know the full glory of Christ, It was, "Jesus, that marvelous tramp, who has given the world such high ethical standards." Jesus a tramp! That is what He seemed like to the men of His day. He had no home—He was glad to receive a drink of water at the hand of a Samaritan woman.

"A homeless Stranger amongst us came
To this land of death and mourning;
He walked in a path of sorrow and shame,
Through insult, and hate, and scorning.

“A Man of sorrows, of toil and tears,
An outcast Man and a lonely;
But He looked on me, and through endless years
Him must I love—Him only.

“Then from this sad and sorrowful land,
From this land of tears He departed;
But the light of His eyes and the touch of His hand
Had left me brokenhearted.

“And I clave to Him as He turned His face
From the land that, was mine no longer—
The land I had loved in the ancient days,
Ere I knew the love that was stronger.

“And I would abide where He abode,
And follow His steps for ever;
His people my people, His God my God,
In the land beyond the river.

“And where He died would I also die,
Far dearer a grave beside Him
Than a kingly place amongst living men,
The place which they denied Him.

“Then afar and afar did I follow Him on,
To the land where He was going—
To the depths of glory beyond the sun,
Where the golden fields were glowing—

“The golden harvest of endless joy,
The joy He had sown in weeping;
How can I tell the blest employ,
The songs of that glorious reaping!

“The recompense sweet, the full reward,

Which the Lord His God has given;
At rest beneath the wings of the Lord,
At home in the courts of heaven.”

—PAUL GERHARDT.

Thus wrote one of the great German pietists in the seventeenth century. This wonderful Jesus, this homeless Stranger, made Himself of no reputation. But here another rendering might be suggested. He emptied Himself or divested Himself. That is, He who was God from eternity threw aside His glory, the insignia of His rank, and came to this world and became poorer than the poorest in order that we might share His riches. There are those who have misunderstood this and said that He emptied Himself of His true deity, of His omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience, and therefore when He was here on earth He was just a man like other men and so limited that when He spoke of the Old Testament as the Word of God He was just expressing the opinion of the people of His day. He did not know any better; He did not know it was not inspired by God. So they tell us, but Scripture tells us though He humbled Himself, divested Himself, He did not cease to be for one moment true God, and He could say, “The words I speak are not mine but the Father’s that sent me.” Whenever He referred to Scripture it was the Father putting His seal upon the Old Testament. His voice was the voice of God.

As a king might lay aside his gorgeous robes, stoop down to take the place and clothing of a workman, so our Lord Jesus laid His glory by and came in the world to die for us. He emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant. The world came into existence at His command; it was He who created the universe—but now He chose to become a servant. The word for servant here is really slave or bondman. He came into this world and surrendered His will, for He said, “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” He came in the likeness of man, He was a real man, a true man, with all a man’s sensitive nature and with all a man’s interest in things about him, and then having been found in fashion as a man—as though that were not enough and it was not enough for if He would save sinners the incarnation alone would not do, He gave His life on Calvary to redeem sinners. I say it reverently, the Son of God could not save men by His incarnation, His birth at Bethlehem—God made manifest in the flesh—was not enough. He must go deeper yet! Calvary must follow Bethlehem. So “being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” I wish I could read that in the spirit the apostle wrote it. I wish it were possible to put in my voice the pathos and tenderness which I know were welling in his heart. Let me try to read it, changing the translation slightly. “Who, being in the form of God, thought equality with God not something to be grasped, but divested himself and took upon himself the form of a bondman and became in the likeness of man: and having been found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, such a death, that of the cross.” The most degrading form of death to which man could be subjected in that day was crucifixion. Yet He chose that. He went to the cross in order that there He might settle the sin question and redeem our guilty souls. Is it any wonder this same apostle 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”? There upon that cross He was delivered to death for our offenses, and when He had put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, they laid His precious body in the tomb, and three days later He was raised again for on

justification. And so we read, "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those on earth should those in the infernal regions, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Oh, how God delighted to raise up His Son and give Him the highest place as man in the universe when His work was finished! You see, He always belonged on the Throne of God as the Eternal Son, but now, since He has gone back to heaven as man, there is someone there who was not seen before. There is a man on the throne of God—the man Christ Jesus! We like to speak of Him as the Man in the Glory. He sits exalted there, our great high priest and intercessor. Some day He is coming back. One can understand the joy of Bunyan's Pilgrim who, when traveling so far with his burdens on his back, came to the cross and there just beyond it the empty tomb. At the sight of that empty cross his burden fell from his back and tumbled into the tomb. He fairly danced with joy as he cried:

"Blessed cross, blessed sepulchre;

Blessed rather be,

The man who there was put to shame for me."

For me! Can your heart say that? For me! You say, "I know He died for sinners," but has He saved you? I was reading only this morning how a gentleman went into the home of a very poor old lady and he saw something on the wall that attracted his attention.

He said, "What is that on the wall?"

"I just don't know what it be but it is a paper my uncle sent me and I just don't like to throw it away and I just keep it there in remembrance."

He exclaimed, "Don't you see what it is!"

"No, I just don't understand it."

"Well, it's a bank check. Look! There is the name of the bank on which it is drawn and 'Pay to Jennie Johnson the sum of \$500,' and there is your uncle's name at the bottom of it."

"What," she says, "did he intend me to have that money and I have been living in poverty all these years!" And it wasn't too late to cash in. How many people are like that. They believe the Word and God's promise—in a certain sense. They know Jesus died to put away sin. But they have never cashed in, they have never trusted Him for themselves.

Is this true of you? If so, why not put in your claim now? Look up to God in faith. Tell Him you are the sinner for whom Christ died and that now you take Him as your own Saviour. Be assured that if you do this He will receive you, cleanse and pardon you, and make you His own forever.

8. Is Peter the Rock Upon Which the Church Is Built?

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets, He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.— MATTHEW 16:13-20, A. R. V.

THIS passage of Scripture has been the source of a great deal of contention, and of difference of opinion among theologians for many years. In fact, ever since the third century of the Christian era there has been continual debate as to the exact meaning of a number of expressions used here. For most of us commonly known as Protestants these questions have been settled long ago. We do not have any perplexity about them, we have learned to go to the Word of God itself for the explanation of its own terms. We believe with Chillingworth that “the Bible and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants” and so are not very much concerned about traditions or about the decisions of church councils or the declarations of popes, fallible or infallible. We turn from all these to the Book itself.

I have been reminded that this is not true of a great many people, people who are just as honest, I take it, just as eager to know what God’s will is, and just as desirous of doing His will as those of us who are called Protestants, but they have been taught to decide questions from an altogether different standpoint. In the first place, they have been taught not to search the Bible themselves for direct instruction in regard to any doctrine. That may seem like a rather broad statement but I believe that I can show you that it is true. They have been taught that inasmuch as Saint Peter has told us that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20), it is a very reprehensible thing for any individual Christian to sit down over the Bible itself depending on the Holy Spirit to open up the truth, without asking the help of the priesthood, of the councils of the church, of the fathers, and of others who are supposed to speak with authority.

The story is told of an Irishman who all of his life had been, as so many of his nation are, a member of the Roman Catholic Church. But someone had given him a New Testament and through reading it he had been brought to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had learned that a man may have eternal life in this world and know it; that he may have all his sins forgiven and be certain of it, that he need not go to any human intermediary but may go direct to the blessed Lord Himself to confess his sins and obtain forgiveness. The result of his study gave Patrick great joy and happiness. He did not know anyone like minded with whom he could have

Christian fellowship, so when others went to the parish church, he remained at home poring over the sacred pages of his New Testament, a Book which he had never seen before but which now meant so much to him. Finally the parish priest missed his erstwhile faithful parishioner, so he arranged to visit him. He came on a day when this happy convert was reading his New Testament, and as the priest entered the room, Patrick rose to meet him with the Book in his hand. "What book is that?" the priest inquired.

And Patrick answered, "Well, sure and your Reverence, it's the New Testament."

"But, Patrick, don't you know that that is not a book for an ignorant man like you to be reading without instruction and help? You will be forming your own private judgment about things and making all kinds of mistakes and going off into some heresy."

But Patrick said, "Well, sure, I have just been reading here, and it's the blessed Apostle Peter says it, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word: that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2), and sure, your Reverence, I have just been born again and I am a babe in Christ and it is the milk I'm thirsting after and I am reading the Word to get it."

"That is very good, Patrick, but you need help and instruction, and the Almighty has appointed the clergy to be the milkmen; He has given them the knowledge: of the truth, and when you want instruction, you should come to the church and we will give it to you as you are able to bear it. You get to studying for yourself and you are sure to go wrong."

But Patrick replied, "Out there in the shed I have a cow and when I was sick some time ago, I had to hire a man to milk her and I soon found he was stealing half of the milk and filling the bucket with water; but when I got well, I discharged him and took to milking me own cow and now I am getting the rich cream. When I was depending upon you, it was milk and water stuff you were giving me; now, thank God, I am milking me own cow and it's the cream of the Word I am getting."

Another story is told of a little lad sitting on the curb in Johannesburg, in South Africa, reading a New Testament, when the priest passed by and, recognizing him as a child of a family belonging to his flock, said, "My boy, what is that book you are reading?"

"It is the New Testament, father," he said.

"But that is not for an ignorant little boy like you to be reading."

The lad replied, "Sure, but I have a search warrant to read it."

"A search warrant! Why, what do you mean?"

"It says here, 'Search the Scriptures,' and so I am after doing what I am told."

How can anyone say that Christians are not capable of reading the Word of God and getting the mind of the Lord when the Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven for the express purpose of opening the truth to those who honestly seek that truth and are prepared to walk according to it?

Our blessed Lord said of the Holy Spirit, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14: 26). Imagine a man cast out on a

desert island with nothing but a copy of the Bible; no teacher, no clergyman, no priest, no church, no other books of any kind to instruct him. Do you mean to say that that man is left without the possibility of acquiring sufficient truth for the saving of his soul because he is beyond the reach of the visible church? Surely not, Wherever a man honestly seeks to know the mind of God, the Holy Spirit is there to reveal the truth to him.

They tell us that we must not use private judgment but must accept the judgment of the councils and the church. But how are we going to decide to accept that? Must I not use my private judgment and decide that I will forego the reasonings of my own intellect and let the councils tell me what to believe? After all, is that not private judgment? I remember reading Cardinal Newman's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* years ago. He tells how up to the day that he decided to submit himself to the Church of Rome and accept the dicta of that Church as his guide, he had very grave doubts of many of the so-called Catholic doctrines, such as the position given to the pope, the place given to the blessed virgin Mary, the doctrine of purgatory, the intercession of saints, and so on, but he said, "When I decided to submit my judgment to the church, all these things were settled for me." But do you not see, he had to make the decision himself? Was not that private judgment? I have investigated these things. I have read much Roman Catholic theology, I have examined a great many volumes put out by Roman Catholic publishers, and after having compared them with the Word of God, my private judgment tells me that I dare not trust the salvation of my soul to the decision of popes or councils if they go contrary to the Book. I am resting upon what this Book reveals as to God's way of salvation, and if it tells me that Peter is the rock on which the Church is built and that there is no salvation except for those who are in the church founded by Peter, I want to know it, but I must find out from the Book.

Now, let us examine the account given in Matthew 16. Our blessed Lord was nearing the end of His testimony here on earth. He had been practically rejected by Israel and was looking out upon the great world of Gentiles. That is what is implied in the thirteenth verse, "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi." Caesarea Philippi was the first great Gentile city just north of the land of Palestine, about twenty miles beyond the border of Palestine, and Jesus had gone up into the northernmost part of Galilee and was looking out toward that great Gentile world thinking of the untold millions who were still in their sins to whom His salvation was yet to come, the men for whom He was soon to die, and He realized that so much depended upon men having a correct understanding of the truth of His person. You will notice in the New Testament that invariably faith is linked with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in one instance does it seem to be linked especially with His work. Links of faith with His person are: "He that believeth on him is not condemned"; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"; "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest"; "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." It is the person that saves, and trusting Him we go on to learn more of His wonderful work, but we begin with faith in Christ Himself. And so He turned to His disciples and interrogated them in this way: "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" And they told Him what the common report had been. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist." This, you recall, was Herod's first reaction when told of His miracles and testimony. Others said He was Elias, for it is written, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Mal. 4:5). Some said He was Jeremiah, for some of the rabbis held that Jeremiah was the unnamed sufferer of Isaiah 53. And others said he was at least

a prophet. Then the Lord asked the question directly, “But whom say ye that I am?” Oh, how we honor Simon Peter for his great confession, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Does the Church of Rome honor Simon Peter? They cannot honor him more than I do. I thank God for his wondrous testimony and for the ministry of this great Servant of the Lord; but I would not think that Simon Peter was a sufficient rock upon which the Church could be built. I find as I read on in the Word that there was too much frailty, too much failure, too much sin in Simon Peter for me to rest my soul on him, but I do honor him as the first one who made this, great confession, one in which gladly join, “Blessed Lord, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

It is always a divine revelation when one is brought to a saving knowledge of Christ. It is not merely a natural thing. We do not arrive at this conclusion by any intellectual process alone. There must be a work in the soul by the Holy Spirit of God before people can recognize the true blessedness of our Lord Jesus. “Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Because of this a Roman Catholic theologian has declared, “It is evident from these words that our Lord wishes us to understand that Simon Peter had secrets with the Father in which Christ Himself did not share. Therefore, we can conceive of circumstances where it might be safer to go to Peter or to his successors than to Christ Himself,” That is the conclusion that one came to when he swung away from the plain testimony of the Word of God and subjected his mind to the decisions of the councils and to church traditions. Safer to go to Peter than to Christ! Every Christian has the same revelation it is God the Father’s revelation to every trusting soul and we get it through the mediatorial work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the Lord adds, “And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter [a piece of rock, a rock-like man if we dare paraphrase] and upon this rock I will build my church.” What rock? Upon Peter? No, nor upon Peter. Then what rock? Let one of the greatest doctors of the Church tell us, if they insist that we must not use our own private judgment in determining the meaning of Holy Scripture. St. Augustine, of whom there is no greater doctor in all the Church, in his comment on this verse, says, “So, then, Christ, not Peter, is the rock on which the Church is built.” Clearly, what our Lord is saying is, “This glorious revelation the Father has given to you, Simon Peter; this great truth that you have confessed—upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of hell—the gates of hades—shall not prevail against it.”

You say, “But that is your private judgment.” Let me turn, then, to an authentic letter written by the Apostle Peter himself and learn from him what he understood the Lord to mean that day. Undoubtedly, if he understood the Lord to say that the Church was to be built upon him, he would tell us so. Popes today are not at all bashful about telling us that there is no salvation outside the church that is built on Peter and that they are Peter’s successors. If Simon Peter believed that, he certainly would not leave his disciples in any doubt regarding it; he would tell them the truth about a matter like this, 1 Peter 2:1-7:

“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual

house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God b Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture Behold I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner.”

Peter tells us that God is building a house and this house rests upon a living stone and that be living stone is Christ! He is the foundation upon whom this glorious, house rests. This house is the Church of the living God. Peter further tells the members of that Church that they are living stones, built upon this foundation. Does not that exactly correspond with our Lord’s words to Peter on the coasts of Caesarea Philippi: “Peter, you are a rocklike man and you are built upon this rock, the confession that I am the Son of the living God”?

Let us see whether other apostles understood it that way. But first let us ask whether our Lord Himself had said anything easier that might suggest the exact meaning of this text. Turn back to the seventh chapter of Matthew’s gospel, verses 24 to 25, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and dotes them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.” What rock was that? It was the rock Christ Jesus, for the man who built upon that rock was the man who kept His sayings. Turn to the writings of the apostle Paul, the first Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter three, and let us see whether we have any light as to the rock upon which the Church is built. In verses 9 to 11 we read:

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon, But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Is there any question as to what that means? Do you need a church council to expound this to you? Do you need an infallible pope to tell you the meaning of the words, “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”? But let us look elsewhere—the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, verses 19 to 22: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.” We do not read here, “Simon Peter himself being the chief corner stone.” It should read that way if the other teaching is correct. But it reads, “Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” And so, whether you listen to Simon Peter, to the blessed Lord Himself, or to His servant, the Apostle Paul, you will find that the Church’s one foundation is not a man, however noble or excellent he may be, but Christ Himself.

But, then, what of the other things that the Lord said to Peter? “I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” It is assumed that Peter is the rock upon which the Church is built and that the church built upon Peter will never come to grief. In other words, the church built upon Peter is an outward organization. But it is perfectly clear that the Church is a great spiritual company, not necessarily

visible to men but one that includes all real believers, and against that Church the gates of hell shall never prevail.

But did not the Lord say unto Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven"? Therefore, has He not committed to Peter the right to close the doors of heaven against any who do not submit to him and to open to those who do? That is what is commonly thought in Romanist circle. But observe, the Lord did not say to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of heaven." Christ never gave the keys of heaven to Peter or to anyone else. He did say, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," But is not the kingdom of heaven heaven itself? Most certainly not! The kingdom of heaven is the sphere on earth where the Lordship of Christ is acknowledged, even though some in that sphere are unreal. It is what we call Christendom. Look at one of the outstanding parables of that kingdom for proof that it includes faithless professors as well as true believers:

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 25; 1-13).

Is that heaven? Surely not. The kingdom of heaven is the sphere on earth of Christian profession. When Christ said, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," it was because of Peter's great confession, and he was to have the signal honor of opening the door of the kingdom of heaven, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles. On the day of Pentecost it was he who opened the door of faith to the Jews, and in Cornelius' house it was Peter who opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Now that the door is open, it stands ajar and whosoever will may enter in.

Did not the Lord give special authority to Peter when he said, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven"? He did give authority to Peter, but the same authority is given to the entire Church. In the eighteenth chapter of Matthew's gospel, verses 15 to 18, he is speaking of any who offend, and he says:

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother, But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Is this authority given particularly to Peter? Not at all, it is given to the Church of God as a whole. What is the meaning of this passage? If a professing member of the Church of God falls into sin, he is to be carefully dealt with, and if he will not repent of his sin, the Church is authorized to bind his sin upon him and put him away from her fellowship. If he comes back a broken-hearted man, confessing his sin and failure, the Church is authorized to forgive him and receive him back into her fellowship. In that sense the Church has been binding and loosing all down through the centuries.

But someone says, "Surely, Peter had some special place over and above others." Turn again to his own epistle, 1 Peter 5:1, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder." Think of that for a moment. A literal translation would be, "The presbyters among you I exhort, who am a co-presbyter," or one on the same level as the rest. If Simon Peter was ever pope, he never knew it, for he speaks of himself as a "co-presbyter" with all the rest of the elders in the Church of God! He assumed no place of authority over them.

What a solemn thing it is when you turn back to the sixteenth chapter of Matthew to find that within a short time after making his confession, Peter proved an absolutely untrustworthy guide:

"From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee."

Is this Peter an infallible pope, rebuking Christ and saying: "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee"? But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God but those that be of men." Is the church built on a man that Christ called Satan? What a strange church that would be! We were having an open-air meeting years ago out West. A friend of mine was preaching most earnestly, and a great big Irishman, half drunk, stepped out and tried to break up our meeting. He kept shouting out as he followed the preacher, with his fists doubled, "What did the Lord say to Peter? Why don't you tell us what the Lord said to Peter? That is what we want to know." The man who was preaching perhaps did not have wit enough to answer him quickly and so tried to go on with his preaching, but a very dignified looking friend, a typical New Englander, standing next to me, listened until he could not stand it any longer. He stepped up to this fellow and said, "The Lord said to Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan," and the man almost dropped in his tracks. He wanted him to say, "I give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and he forgot that the Lord said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Long after the day of Pentecost, when one would have thought that Peter would have been utterly beyond failure, that he could have been trusted in everything, we find that he turned aside from the truth for a time. In Galatians 2:11 we read, "But when Peter was to come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." What do you think would happen if one of the bishops should withstand the pope to his face in the presence of all the rest of them? But the apostle Paul did not recognize any superiority in Peter; he did not see in him the head of the Church or the rock on which the Church was built; but saw him misbehaving and said, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them

which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." The Greek word is "hypocrisy." The apostle Peter is here branded as acting the part of a hypocrite. The Church built on one who, for a time, became guilty of hypocrisy and whose influence was so bad that it misled others so that even Barnabas was carried away by the hypocrisy! And Paul goes on to say:

"When I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Here, then, we see Peter failing, sinning, needing repentance; surely unfit to be the rock on which the Church is built.

The whole tradition about Peter being in Rome and being the first pope is absolutely unsubstantiated. According to a tradition that had its rise in the latter part of the second century after Christ, we are told that Peter went to Rome in 42 A. D. and founded the church there and then remained as bishop of Rome until 67 A. D., when he was martyred, led out of the city to be crucified. They were going to crucify him in the ordinary way, but he said, "No, I denied my Lord once, I am not worthy to be crucified as He was. Crucify me with my head downward." Tradition says he was crucified in the ordinary way. We have no way of knowing whether he was in Rome to be crucified or not. There does seem to be a measure of testimony that would intimate that possibly this is true, but when they tell us that he was in Rome from 42 A. D. to 67 A. D., we have positive evidence to the contrary, because those very years are covered largely by the book of Acts.

We know that Peter was not in Rome in 50 A. D., because in that year the apostle Paul with Barnabas went up to Jerusalem, and the council of Jerusalem decided that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses to be saved. Peter was there, and the apostle Paul says that after discussing things it was decided at that council that Peter should work among the Jews and Paul among the Gentiles. Just imagine Peter, as bishop of Rome, a great Gentile city, after it was definitely settled at Jerusalem that his work was to be among the Jews.

Peter could not have been in Rome in 58 A. D., for in that year Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans and sent greetings to a great many people, but there was not a solitary reference to Peter's presence in Rome. Neither could he have founded the church there, because Paul was to go there, and he stated himself that he did not build upon another man's foundation. The work there was commenced without any apostle.

Peter was not in Rome in 61 A. D. to 63 A. D., for in those years Paul was there in prison, and he wrote those four wonderful prison letters, and there is not the slightest recognition of Peter's presence in any of them. Paul sent greetings to other Christians, and you can imagine how ready he would have been to say, "And Peter, the apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, sends greetings." But Peter was not there, so he could not send greetings. We have some letters from Peter which were written between 60 A. D. and 67 A. D., and the second of these was written from Babylon, where he was laboring among the dispersed of Israel. We have not the slightest evidence that he was

ever in Rome unless he went there just before his death. He was never a bishop of Rome. We can be very certain of this.

Did not our Lord give to Peter and also to the other apostles special authority, such as only the priests of Rome have today, when He said to them, as recorded in John 20, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:22 and 23)? Did not the Lord give unto His apostles as the first bishops of the Church special authority to forgive and to retain sins? The best way to answer that question is to see whether we can find an explanation of remission of sins from somebody who was there. When we turn to the tenth chapter of Acts, we get just such a testimony. Peter, preaching in the home of Cornelius, said, "And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree; him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly" (verses 39 and 40). And now verse 43: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." How does Peter proclaim remission of sins? Through faith in Christ. If Jesus had given to Peter and to the rest of the apostles the authority to forgive sins, when men came and made their confession, Peter would have said to Cornelius, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through certain authorized ministers of his you may receive remission of sins. If you will come and make a good confession and do proper penance, your sins will be forgiven." But this was not the case; in the clearest possible language he showed that all men who trust in the Lord Jesus Christ have remission of sins. "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." So Peter proclaimed remission of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I come to you as a genuine successor of Peter; I come to you in the direct apostolic order. All down through the ages saints of God have been following in the line of the apostles; and as a Christian minister I say to you, by divine authority, if you want remission of sins, come to Jesus, not to a priest; acknowledge your guilt to Jesus; tell Him you are the sinner for whom He died, and I dare declare to you on the authority of the Son of God, when you do that, you have remission of sins, for Jesus says, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted." If you refuse to come, if you do not turn to Christ, your sins remain upon you for all eternity, for Jesus says, "Whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." If you are a weary, sin-sick soul, anxious to enter into peace with God, come to Christ and find salvation in Him.

9. Divine Healing - Is it in the Atonement?

No instructed Christian can help acknowledging the power of the Lord to heal the body as well as to save the soul. He who credits the miracles of the New Testament, as every sincere Christian must, necessarily recognizes the healing power of God. It is not, therefore, my desire to discuss the possibility of physical healing in answer to prayer, nor the reality of many apparent miracles of healing in our own day in connection with the ministry of certain preachers, both male and female, who give a large place to this particular phase of ministry in their public work: God can heal. God has healed. God does heal. He heals in answer to prayer. He heals where there is no prayer at all by the recuperative power of nature. He heals, as in Hezekiah's case, by the use of means. He has often healed in answer to the prayer of the individual who was sick, or of others who prayed for him. There are too many reputable testimonies at the present time to such healings to question them for a moment, Therefore, I do not intend to consider this phase of the subject at all.

But there is another serious question for many tried and distressed souls, namely, Is healing in the atonement and therefore available for any Christian who claims it by faith during the present dispensation of the grace of God?

Those who answer this question in the affirmative point at once to what they consider to be an incontrovertible proof text found in Matthew 8. There we are told: "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils; and 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" (vs. 16, 17).

Now, I admit that a cursory examination of this passage seems to prove conclusively that our Lord bore our infirmities and sicknesses on the cross somewhat in the same sense as He is said to have borne our sins in His own body on the tree—that is, He suffered instead of us. It was impossible that our sins as such could ever have been transferred from us to Him in such a sense as to make Him actually the sinner. But He bore them in that He endured the judgment which we had deserved because of those very sins. So some believe that on the cross He suffered the pains and the anguish, and endured the symptoms of all our diseases, thus becoming the substitute for sickness as well as for sin. The horrible conclusion has been drawn from this theory that our Lord when on the cross became "a living, breathing mass of corruption." I use the exact language which I once heard used by a leading advocate of divine healing. The speaker went on to say that every disease to which humanity is subject had fastened itself on the body of Christ when He hung upon the cross; that He had endured all the ravages of these diseases in order that He might bear them away from us. So that now in resurrection, the new life of His glorified body is available for us by faith to combat diseased pathological conditions in our bodies. I may not have stated the doctrine in the same way that all its advocates present it, but I am giving it as nearly as I can recollect, in language which I heard used.

A more careful examination, however, of the verses quoted from Matthew 8 will make evident at once the striking fact that the inspired writer is not referring to the atonement on the cross, but is

explaining something that happened during the earthly ministry of our Lord. As He moved about among men He manifested His compassion and power by delivering them from their diseases. He did not do this without cost to Himself, In His deep, tender sympathies, He entered into the sorrows and sufferings of those whom He healed. When the woman who touched the hem of His garment was healed, He “perceived that virtue had gone out of him.” There was a response on His part to her deep need. It cost Him something to heal. He really bore the sorrows of others. He took their infirmities and their diseases. He felt with them and for them. Any true Christian minister who knows what it is to enter into the distress and perplexities of those among whom he moves, particularly if he labors among the poor, shares in large measure our Lord’s exercises as recorded here. Paul filled up on his part the sufferings of Christ for his body’s sake, which is the Church, as he bore on his heart the great burden of the people of God. This was to him more than all his other sufferings; for after enumerating the trials he endured, he adds, “and besides all this that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” During the three and a half years of our Lord’s ministry on earth, He never saw suffering that He did not alleviate it, unless, indeed, His grace was resisted. And it was this intense compassion for mankind and sympathy for the distressed, not merely the persecutions He endured, that made Him the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. The more we drink in His spirit, the more we shall know the meaning of the poet’s words:

“Saddened, ah, yes, saddened

By earth’s deep sin and woe;

How could I pass unheeding

What grieved my Saviour so?”

To refer the bearing of sicknesses to the Cross instead of linking it with the life and ministry of our Lord on His way to the Cross is to misunderstand grossly His entire mission. If He has made atonement for sicknesses, then it is unthinkable that any believer could ever endure pain or illness. Because He has made atonement for sins, no believer shall ever come into judgment. The penalty is forever removed. In the same way, if He had stood in the place of the sick as He stood in the place of the sinner, our sicknesses would be as far removed from us as our sins.

A well authenticated fact is worth, any amount of unproved theories. If we can find recorded in Scripture any instance whatever where Christians were allowed to be sick, and were not miraculously healed, then the whole theory falls to the ground. To four outstanding instances I would direct attention.

First, there is that of the apostle Paul himself. He had been caught up to the third heaven. Upon his return to earth there was sent to him as thorn in the flesh, “a messenger of Satan to buffet him” lest he should be exalted above measure. There was no danger for a saint in the third heaven. There was danger when he came back to earth lest he should be lifted up in spiritual pride by the abundance of the revelation given unto him. To preserve Paul from this, God took disciplinary measures. It is not necessary to attempt to define the exact nature of the thorn, but it is important to observe that it was in the flesh. It was something physical. It was something that cost Him intense humiliation. It was something that cost Him severe suffering. It is termed an affliction. It in some way weakened him. for he puts it in contrast with strength. He besought the Lord that it should be taken from him. He prayed earnestly that he might be healed. Instead of answering his

prayer in that particular way; the Lord, as it were, said to him, "Paul, I will not remove the thorn. I will not deliver you from the infirmity, but I will do something better for you. I will enable you to triumph over it. My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness." Immediately the apostle ceased to pray for deliverance and fell in with the will of God, exclaiming, "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Our second witness is Epaphroditus. of whom we read in Philippians 2, verses 25 to 30. There we learn that he was a devoted servant of Christ, one worthy to be esteemed by Paul as a brother and companion in labor and a fellow soldier. He was unselfish, faithful, and conscientious. But he was sick; he was very sick. As the days and weeks wore on, his sickness increased until he was nigh unto death. He was sick for so long a time that word of his illness went clear back from Rome to Philippi, and the saints there were greatly disturbed concerning him. Paul prayed for him; so, doubtless, did many others. Yet no miracle was wrought in his case. No healer appeared to lay his hands upon him and raise him up. Neither was he rebuked for his lack of faith. His illness was permitted to run its course, and at last God had mercy on him and he recovered. In this last expression we may learn the truth as to physical healing during the present dispensation. It is mercy. It is not something that is ours by right. It is not something to be demanded. It is not something that we can claim on the ground that it was bought and paid for on Calvary. It is simply divine mercy meeting our deep need according to the will of God.

The third case in point is that of Timothy. No young preacher was ever more highly esteemed than Timothy was esteemed by Paul. He was a true pastor and one whose tender heart was ever exercised by the state of the Lord's people. If anyone ever needed a robust constitution in order to continue without let or hindrance in the work of the Lord, Timothy did, so far as human judgment goes. But Timothy was a dyspeptic. Like many other itinerant, he probably suffered from the ever-kindness of some good Marthas and the penuriousness of others. Varying climates and polluted water had grievously affected his health. What a mercy if he could have attended a healing meeting and gone down to the front to be prayed for! But neither Paul nor Timothy had ever heard of a healing meeting in all of their lives. Such gatherings had not yet come into existence. Instead of recommending anything of the kind, Paul gave a common-sense prescription. He wrote, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and for thine often infirmity" (1 Tim. 5:23). This is as truly inspired Scripture as John 3:16, and the Holy Ghost has recorded it for our learning. Paul, who had healed many by the laying on of hands as a testimony to the supernatural character of his ministry, instructed Timothy to use precautionary measures to keep from breaking down his constitution and to recover from the effects of previous conditions.

Our last instance is that of Trophimus. We read of him in 2 Timothy 4:20: "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." Of this man we know little, except that in Acts 20 we learn that he was in Paul's company when he went down to Troas on his second missionary journey. As 2 Timothy was written many years afterwards, during the apostle's last imprisonment, it is quite likely that Trophimus had been an intimate companion throughout the years. But he was sick. He was so sick that he had to remain quietly at Miletum and could not accompany Paul to Rome. There is no intimation that his sickness was a judgment upon him. Neither is there any intimation that he was to blame for remaining sick. We are not told that he might have been well if only he had appropriated the resurrection life of Christ by faith! What we do know is that he was a Christian

and a servant of the Lord. But he was sick. Tens of thousands have been in the same circumstances since, in spite of the fact that Christ died on the Cross.

It is very evident that neither Paul nor Epaphroditus nor Timothy nor Trophimus knew anything of the modern doctrine that Christ bore our sicknesses on the Cross and therefore believers should never be sick. To be in the company of these men is to be in good company. If, in the wisdom of God, a thorn in the flesh is sent to us; if, in the work of the Lord, we are permitted to be "sick nigh unto death"; if the earnest missionary and faithful shepherd of souls finds the need of care in regard to eating and drinking that he may be at his best for God; if we find ourselves left at some Miletum sick, while others go on with the work, or go out to prison and death for Christ's sake, the subject believer will simply say, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth to Him good." There will be no complaining, nor will there be doubt and darkness because an unscriptural doctrine is impossible of realization, in practical experience. But we shall say with our brother Paul, "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

On the other hand, we know that eventually as a result of the work of the Cross, all believers will be fully delivered from every physical result of sin. But this will be at the coming of the Lord Jesus, when "he shall transform the body of our humiliation, that it may be made like unto the body of his glory." This was what Paul looked forward to, and has been the goal of saints all through the dispensation, namely, the redemption of the body. It is our hope. But until its realization "we groan being burdened," but we are enabled to triumph by faith in spite of sickness and suffering, knowing that all will be over when our Saviour returns.

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