

WRITINGS OF BOB JR JONES

by Bob Jr Jones

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Bob Jr Jones, compiled for study and devotional reading.

24 Chapters

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01.00.1. "AS THE SMALL RAIN"

"AS THE SMALL RAIN" b by

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"My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deuteronomy 32:2)

01.00.5. Publisher's Foreward

Publisher's Foreward

These articles, under the title "A Look at the Book," originally appeared in a syndicated column published in several hundred newspapers. It is conservatively estimated that in this form they have been read by several million people.

From a great many of the columns appearing over a period of years the publishers have selected those included in this volume. Not only do they afford rich spiritual reading, but they also provide outlines, material and ideas for the construction of sermons and devotional messages. An appropriate poem in harmony with the theme of each article has been included. Together they offer interesting material for a brief radio broadcast.

01.01. The Entrance of Thy Words Giveth Light (Psa_119:130)

“The Entrance of Thy Words Giveth Light”

(Psalms 119:130)

CHAPTER ONE NO OTHER NAME

“THE devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.” Shakespeare puts these words into the mouth of one of his characters in *The Merchant of Venice*, and the Scriptures themselves bear evidence of the accuracy of Shakespeare’s observation, for the devil in tempting Christ quoted the Word of God. Evil and dishonest men have never hesitated to use a passage of Scripture in an attempt to justify their wrong course of action or to excuse their evildoing. Of course, such a procedure is in itself evil and dishonest since the Scripture is by them misquoted or misused or misapplied. The Word of God nowhere admonishes men to a course of action which violates the law of God.

Whatever else the Scriptures may or may not prove, they do testify that the Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. It is a sad fact that by many people today this great and primary truth of the Book is overlooked or forgotten.

Apollos preaching at Ephesus convinced his hearers, “shewing by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28). Christ Himself admonished His hearers to “search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). Christ is the center of the Book, the burden of the prophet’s message, the theme of the psalmist’s lay, the chief character of the Gospels, the fountainhead and inspiration of the Epistles, the sublime and majestic central figure of Revelation.

The Bible discloses God’s purpose and love for man. It is God’s Written Word. Christ is the Incarnate Word—the Word of God come in the flesh. The Bible speaks of Christ. Christ manifests in His own wonderful Person the truth of the Bible.

Men today wrest the Scriptures to prove their own pet theories and opinions. They are glibly quoting Scripture without regard for its purpose or true teaching. But the man who searches the Word diligently with an open mind cannot fail to be convinced of the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the One come in the flesh to redeem men from sin by the blood which He shed upon Calvary’s cross. He must admit the truth of the Bible’s teaching that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

In the sacred pages of Holy Writ, God the Father claims Christ as His Son, proclaims His deity, acclaims His perfections. Through the Word the Father speaks to us of the Christ, “This is my beloved Son: hear him.”

O Word of God Incarnate, O Wisdom from on high, O Truth unchanged, unchanging, O Light of our dark sky;

We praise Thee for the radiance That from the hallowed page, A lantern to our footsteps, Shines on from age to age.

The Church from her dear Master

Received the gift divine,

And still that light she lifteth

O'er all the earth to shine.

It is the golden casket

Where gems of truth are stored;

It is the heav'n-drawn picture

Of Christ the living Word.

It floateth like a banner Before God's host unfurled;

It shineth like a beacon Above the darkling world;

It is the chart and compass That o'er life's surging sea, 'Mid mists and rocks and quicksands Still guides, O Christ, to Thee.

-William W. How THE CRITICS FAIL

I HAVE watched a scientist, as he lectured on the wonders of botany, tear a flower petal from petal and part from part until there was no flower left. That which had been beautiful was destroyed. Instead of the perfect loveliness of the blossom there were scattered petals and yellow pollen. In his efforts to discover for himself or point out to others the intricate structure of the flower, he destroyed it. Vivisectionists have cut up living bodies trying to discover the secret of life and in the process they have destroyed life.

The so-called "higher critics" remind one of the botanist and the vivisectionist. They seek to tear apart the Word of God. Verse by verse, chapter by chapter, book by book, author by author, they untwist and unwind and pry apart. They dissect that which is a living whole.

Of course, man cannot destroy the Bible. God's Word is forever fixed in heaven. Higher criticism, which never takes into account the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural character of the Scripture, can never destroy the Word which is as eternal as the God who gave it. In their effort to prove their own theories as to authorship and to discover contradictions in the Word where no contradictions exist, they only dull further the blunt blades of their own intellectual instruments.

The sad part about the whole process, however, is this. As far as their own perception is concerned they miss the beauty of the flower which they seek to analyze and divide part from part. Though they can never destroy the living word, they are unconscious that it is living and vital and as they cut out a fragment here and a fragment there, they fail to find the eternal life which God's Word offers to them, for this book from Genesis to Revelation speaks of Him who is the Life of God, the One who is the Author of eternal life, the One who came that man might have life. The Word of God is a whole.

To the believer each portion is precious and each promise is sweet. The analysis of all the higher critics in the world cannot explain it. The wisdom of man cannot reproduce it any more than the botanist can make a flower or the scientist give life.

Last eve I paused beside the blacksmith's door,

And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;

Then looking in, I saw upon the floor, Old hammers worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,

"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"

"Just one," said he, and then, with twinkling eye,

"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

"And so," I thought, "The Anvil of God's Word

For ages skeptic blows have beat upon, Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,

The Anvil is unharmed, the hammers gone."

- John Clifford FOOLISH PREACHING

PEOPLE have a way of saying, "I would read the Bible more except that I cannot understand it." Many Bible scholars will agree that there are certain parts in the Book whose meaning they cannot understand. This is no reflection on the Bible, however, but rather upon the low spiritual understanding of man. I doubt if there are any two students of the Bible who will agree completely on the interpretation of every part of the Word, but the Bible is always clear and explicit and easily understood when it tells a man what he needs to know in order to be saved. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

"There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," says Peter speaking of Christ. The Son of God Himself made the way of salvation perfectly plain when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." In those words, called the heart of the Gospel (John 3:16), the way of salvation is again plainly stated: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is not understanding the Bible that saves man. It is trusting Christ.

Some men have not read enough of the Bible to know whether they understand it or not, but this much is certain: when you have trusted Christ as your Saviour, and love Him, you will find a love for the Bible and a desire to read it. The one who reads the Bible with faith in the Christ whom the Book reveals, finds that much which was, before his conversion, beyond his comprehension, now has become clear and plain.

In his first letter to the Corinthian Church, Paul says, "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness." That is, the Gospel of the grace of God seems a foolish thing to those who have not experienced it. He continues, "But unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

As a child of God, having experienced His grace, one understands the Word of God in a way in which the unsaved never can. The Book itself is explicit on this point: "But the natural man received, not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The man who is born of the Spirit, who has had a personal experience with God, will understand many things in the Word of God which were beyond his comprehension before he was saved. But anyone can interpret the plain meaning of Scripture where the Book points the way of salvation. The Spirit breathes upon the Word, And brings the truth to sight;

Precepts and promises afford A sanctifying light. A glory gilds the sacred page Majestic like the sun;

It gives a light to every age- It gives, but borrows none.

-William Cowper FOR ALL MEN

A MISSIONARY traveling in the Near East stopped for the night in the tent of a shepherd whom he had visited several years before. The old nomad greeted him with the question, "Did you bring back the sheep book?"

For a moment the missionary was at a loss to understand the meaning of the question. Then it occurred to him that when he had last seen the old shepherd he had read to him in his own language Psalms 23:1-6, and to this ignorant keeper of flocks the Bible was the "sheep book." He understood its language as it spoke about the Shepherd and the sheep. They were things with which he was familiar.

Wonderful Book! Each man finds in its pages something which seems addressed especially to him. The sinner sees his picture, painted by the hand of God in the words of the holy men of old, who "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). He sees his sin set forth; in all its blackness. Beholding himself pictured as God sees him, he becomes conscious of his need for a Saviour, and in the pages of the Bible the Saviour is presented, Jesus Christ who bore the guilt of the sinner on the cross and became the propitiation for his sin.

Lonely hearts find comfort as they turn its pages. The seekers after knowledge find divine truth. The Bible must be God's Book, for its appeal is broader than any nation or century or language or class of men. It sounds the depths of the human soul. It probes into the thoughts of the mind and the impulses instinctive in the human heart. Chinese hearing God's Word for the first time cry, "This Book was written for the Chinese." The women of India say it was written for them. Both are right. To them and to all men everywhere God speaks through the Bible, His own infallible Word.

God, in the Gospel of His Son,

Makes His eternal counsels known;

Where love in all its glory shines,

And truth is drawn in fairest lines.

Here sinners of a humble frame May taste His grace, and learn His Name; May read, in characters of blood, The wisdom, pow'r and grace of God.

The pris'ner here may break his chains;
The weary rest from all his pains;
The captive feel his bondage cease;
The mourner find the way of peace.
Here faith reveals to mortal eyes
A brighter world beyond the skies;
Here shines the light which guides our way
From earth to realms of endless day.
O grant us grace, Almighty Lord,
To read and mark Thy holy Word;
Its truths with meekness to receive,
And by its holy precepts live.

-Thomas Cotterill THE DIVINE AUTHOR THE proof of the inspiration of Scripture may be found not only in that which the Bible contains, but also in that which is omitted from the Book. Were the Bible, like other books, only the product of the minds and hearts and experiences of human writers, there would have been many more details set down. The human instinct of curiosity about people and places and events would have been by human authors more fully satisfied. The record would have been embellished and colored and dramatized.

Take, for example, the Gospels. They contain the account of the life of our Lord upon earth. The four books together would make a very small volume, not more than can be read quite easily in a few hours' time. They deal with the greatest personality ever to appear on the stage of history. They are the record of His life, His ministry, His dramatic and tragic death, the stupendous miracle of His resurrection. Modern biographers write hundreds of pages about relatively unimportant men and women, but God, the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, gives us this short account of the life among men of the Saviour of the world. Many of His deeds, much that He said, is left unrecorded. John himself toward the close of His book notes this, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book" (John 20:30). And, in the last verse, he gives us the reason for the things which the record does contain. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

All that men need to know in order to be saved is found in the Word of God. God's dealings with men are there set forth. The Book records His law and declares His will. In reading it the sinner is convicted, the backslider admonished, the saint comforted. It not only points the way to heaven. It affords light and strength and joy to those who walk that Way. The heav'ns declare Thy glory,

Lord, In ev'ry star Thy wisdom shines;
But when our eyes behold Thy Word,

We read Thy Name in fairer lines. The rolling sun, the changing light,
And nights and days, Thy pow'r confess;
But the blest volume Thou didst write,
Reveals Thy justice and Thy grace.
Sun, moon, and stars convey Thy praise
Round the whole earth, and never stand;
So, when Thy truth began its race,
It touch'd and glanc'd on ev'ry land.
Nor shall Thy spreading Gospel rest,
Till thro' the world Thy truth has run;
Till Christ has all the nations blest
That see the light or feel the sun.
Great Sun of Righteousness, arise;
Bless the dark world with heavenly light;
The Gospel makes the simple wise;
Thy laws are pure, Thy judgments right.
Thy noblest wonders here we view,
In souls renewed, and sins forgiven;
Lord, cleanse our sins, our souls renew,
And make Thy Word our guide to heaven.

-Isaac Watts

BEST SELLER

THE Bible judged from any standpoint is an unusual and remarkable Book. The book of Job, the oldest portion according to the opinion of sound scholarship, is more than three thousand years old. The newest portion, the book of Revelation, was written about 96 A.D. Between these two books, through the intervening centuries, the others were written by approximately forty men. Yet there is not a single contradiction or discrepancy in the whole book.

The Bible is not a treatise on science, but when it deals with science it is scientifically accurate. It is not primarily a book of history, yet the archaeologist digging up the records of ancient civilization has proved over and over again its historical inerrancy. From every viewpoint it is the world's most valuable volume. Someone has said that wicked men would not have written the Bible because it reproves human wickedness. Good men would not have written it because it claims divine

authorship.

The only explanation of the Book is found in the fact that the Bible “came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). God Himself, through the instrumentality of His servants, who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is the Author of the Book.

The Word has a radiant and transforming power over mind and heart and life. “The entrance of thy words giveth light” (Psalms 119:130). The Word of God throws light upon the relationship of man with man, nation with nation, and upon the relationship of men and nations with God. There is no other volume which so stimulates the mind and enlightens the intellect.

But the Bible does more than bring intellectual enlightenment. It expels spiritual darkness in the human heart and brings the light of the very presence of God Himself into the souls of those who accept its promises and trust the Redeemer whom it reveals.

The man who believes and loves the Book finds it a lamp to his feet in the darkness of this world and a light on the path which he walks (Psalms 119:105). The Book gives light. The Book is light. The Word of God treasured in the human heart dispels the darkness of sin.

The psalmist has written, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalms 119:11). The Word inwardly pondered affects outward action. The Word of God hidden in the human heart does not stay hidden. Like a bright flame in a lamp, its light shines out through the life.

Though the cover is worn And the pages are torn,

And though places bear traces of tears, Yet more precious than gold Is the Book, worn and old,

That can shatter and scatter my fears.

When I prayerfully look In the precious old Book,

Many pleasures and treasures I see;

Many tokens of love From the Father above,

Who is nearest and dearest to me.

This old Book is my guide, 'Tis a friend by my side,

It will lighten and brighten my way; And each promise I find Soothes and gladdens my mind

As I read it and heed it today.

- Anonymous ~ end of chapter 1 ~

01.02. Now Is The Day of Salvation

“Now Is The Day of Salvation”

(2 Corinthians 6:2)

CHAPTER TWO NO FREEDOM IN FLATTERY

THERE is one sin greatly condemned in the Bible against which you almost never hear anyone preach. It is the sin of flattery, and how largely it is practiced these days. Some flatter with no malicious intent. They desire popularity and want people to like them, and so they cultivate the habit of saying that which will please the hearer without regard to its truth; or, they have read some popular book on psychology, which tells them that the way to make friends is to flatter, and they put into practice this advice with never a thought that they are being dishonest.

Others flatter for more malicious reasons. Politicians have discovered that the surest way to cause an opponent to make a fool of himself is to flatter him into doing something which in an uninflated state of mind he would have better judgment than to attempt. Others indulge in flattery to get something from the object of their flattery. They are like the fox in the fable who flattered the crow by praising his beautiful voice. When the crow, full of vanity, opened his beak to sing, he dropped the piece of cheese he was holding, and the fox gobbled it up.

Some people flatter from sheer cowardice. They lack the courage to speak the truth. They will say what another expects of them rather than what they know to be so.

There are preachers who are guilty here. Instead of preaching against the sins of unregenerate human hearts, they flatter their hearers with smooth-sounding messages on the greatness of the human race. Sinners lost and undone feel no conviction as they sit under their ministry, but go out full of self-satisfaction to continue in their sin. They are trapped pinioned in a net of smooth words, when if they had been told the truth about themselves and their own sinful condition and pointed to the Lord Jesus, they would have found in truth and in Him who is Truth, freedom from the chains of sin. Truly, “a man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet” (Proverbs 29:5).

There is no flattering of the Adamic nature and of sinners in God’s Word. Unregenerate men hate and despise the Word of God because it tells them the truth about themselves. Men do not want the truth. Men prefer flattery, but it is only in the truth that freedom is found.

Let not the wise their wisdom boast, The mighty glory in their might,

The rich in flattering riches trust, Which take their everlasting flight

The rush of numerous years bears down

The most gigantic strength of man; And where is all his wisdom gone,

When dust he turns to dust again?

One only gift can justify The boasting soul that knows his God; When Jesus doth His blood apply,
I glory in His sprinkled blood.

The Lord, my righteousness, I praise, I triumph in the love divine,
The wisdom, wealth and strength of grace, In Christ to endless ages mine.

- Charles Wesley

PAGAN AMERICA

AMERICA is not a Christian country. There are Christians in America. Christian influences went into the building of our nation and the impact of Christian truth is still felt to some extent in our national law and life, but America is essentially and predominantly pagan. The great majority of our people worship the same gods which were revered in ancient Greece and Rome. Of course, they are not called by their classical names nor recognized as deities, but they are worshiped nonetheless, though graven images are not set up and statues and altars are not erected to them.

When the ancients worshiped Jupiter or Mars or Venus, they were bowing down before some attribute or characteristic of their own human nature which they had deified. Athena was the deification of wisdom, Mars of war, Venus of lust. The deities were made in the image of their worshipers.

Today in America, though men do not burn incense on the altars dedicated to deities who are projections of their own characteristics and impulses and passions, they worship and serve these attributes and passions, for the thing which becomes supreme in their lives becomes the god of their lives.

There are some men who worship their own intellects. Their minds are their gods; wisdom is their chief pursuit. The standard by which they measure values is the standard of their own reasoning. Others sacrifice everything to greed; avarice is their god. They are devotees of wealth.

Others are mastered by their appetite for drink. No priest of Bacchus was ever more zealous than they. Many live to serve the lust of the flesh and worship the base passions of their nature.

America is a pagan nation. America is not a Christian nation. It never will be until Christ becomes the Lord of our people.

Dread Jehovah! God of nations! From Thy temple in the skies,

Hear Thy people's supplications:

Now for their deliverance rise.

Lo! with deep contrition turning, In Thy holy place we bend;

Hear us, fasting, praying, mourning;

Hear us, spare us, and defend.

Though our sins, our hearts confounding, Long and loud for vengeance call, Thou hast mercy more abounding;

Jesus' blood can cleanse them all.

Let that mercy veil transgression;

Let that blood our guilt efface: Save Thy people from oppression;

Save from spoil Thy holy place.

- Thomas Cotterill MEN OF GOOD WILL

ABOUT two thousand years ago, Christ was born. Ever since men have sought the benefits which have come to earth as a result of His presence among the sons of men. At the same time, they have rejected Him.

How much blessing has come as a result of His life and teaching! Had He not been born, there would be no hospitals, no old people's homes, no orphanages, no asylums. Mercy, education, charity, equity-these always follow the preaching of the Gospel. Children have a debt to the Babe in the manger for the lot of children is happier where His Name is known. Motherhood received its crown from the One who on the cross said to John, "Behold thy mother" (John 19:27). Where the Christian religion is taught, woman is lifted from the slavery which she occupies under pagan teaching.

Man has welcomed all these benefits, but many have rejected Him from whom they come and turned their backs upon Him of whose way of life they are the fruit. They have sought the truth and rejected the Teacher of the truth. They have welcomed mercy but rejected God's Son who came to earth as the Gift of divine mercy. Is it any wonder that almost two thousand years after His birth the world is still torn asunder by war and aflame with strife!

How can there be peace when the hearts of men are turned against the Prince of Peace? When He sojourned among men, God's Son "came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11), and down the ages ever since the world which He made has rejected Him. But always there has been a little group whose hearts were open to Him. It is to these few in every age and generation that peace has come. They are the men of good will in whose hearts the Prince of Peace has been enthroned. There He reigns, giving peace in the midst of all the conflict of nations and clash of opinions and the vain strife of man.

Since Jesus is my Friend, And I to Him belong,

It matters not what foes intend, However fierce and strong.

He whispers in my breast Sweet words of holy cheer:

How they who seek in God their rest Shall ever find Him near.

How God hath built above, A city fair and new,

Where eye and heart shall see and prove What faith has counted true.

My heart for gladness springs, It cannot more be sad;

For very joy it laughs and sings- Sees nought but sunshine glad.

The Sun that lights mine eyes Is Christ, the Lord I love;

I sing for joy for that which lies Stored up for me above.

- Paul Gerhardt

MORAL COWARDICE

PONTIUS PILATE was not a vicious man. He was a coward. He lacked the courage of his convictions. He lacked the strength of character to defy public opinion. He was afraid to risk his political position by doing what he knew was right.

As a judge he found Christ innocent of the charges brought against Him. He said, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4). Law and conscience demanded that He be released, but the leaders of Israel were determined to have His blood and "Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required" (Luke 23:24).

Pilate preferred to see this "just man" slain rather than risk the enmity of the Jewish leaders. He was afraid of what they might say to Caesar and feared that their lies might cost him his position as governor of Judea. There are still plenty of Pilates in politics and in every other business of life as well. They would like to do what they know to be right, but they are afraid to take a position contrary to popular opinion. They think more of their own popularity than they do of justice.

- There are parents who permit their children to do things which are against their own conscience because other young people are doing those things, and because the parents lack the courage to be firm with their own children.

- There are teachers who compromise their convictions rather than offend some members of the school board.

- There are preachers who fail to preach against sin because they are afraid of stepping on the toe of some prominent member of the church.

We need nothing so much as firm conviction and the courage to stand by it. According to tradition, Pilate lost his position as governor of Judea after the crucifixion of Christ, He was recalled to Rome and sent into exile, where he died. Sacrificing his convictions, he sacrificed the respect of all men who know from the Bible the story of his cowardice. The man who compromises always loses the respect of those whose love and favor he seeks to gain. In the hour of trial,

Jesus, plead for me;

Lest by base denial,

I depart from Thee.

When Thou seest me waver,

With a look recall,

Nor for fear or favor

Suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures
Would this vain world charm,
Or its sordid treasures
Spread to work me harm,
Bring to my remembrance
Sad Gethsemane,
Or, in darker semblance,
Cross-crowned Calvary.
Should Thy mercy send me
Sorrow, toil and woe;
Or should pain attend me
On my path below,
Grant that I may never
Fail Thy hand to see,
Grant that I may ever
Cast my care on Thee.

- James Montgomery

PORK OR PARADISE

CHRIST came to the country of the Gadarenes, and they asked Him to depart from their coast. Why?

There was a poor outcast possessed of many demons living in the tombs of the hillside. From this fierce, unhappy creature the Lord Jesus Christ cast out the tormenting spirits, permitting them to go into a herd of swine. Unwilling to give habitation to the spirits that had controlled the man, the swine ran into the sea and were drowned (Mark 5:1-17).

These Gadarenes had the wrong sense of value. They thought more of their pigs than they did of a man. They asked the Son of God to leave them because they preferred to see a man in the grip of demons rather than to lose some swine.

Some people are like that today. They think more of temporal gain than they do of eternal values. Some men are so busy attending to business that they have no time for their families, and in struggling to accumulate a fortune they let their own children go to destruction.

There are many people who refuse to let the Lord Jesus Christ come into their lives because they want to hold on to some selfish ambition or evil habit or sinful practice. They reject the Saviour because they do not want to give up some fleeting pleasure or worldly idol. They would rather

have a few pigs than the presence of the Son of God and all the joy which His salvation brings. They would rather have hogs than heaven, pork than paradise. Christ says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," but the Gadarenes among us prefer to keep their pigs. Indeed, there is a strange kinship between such men and their swine-both are satisfied with the gratification of the senses and both lack appreciation of intangible realities. The Lord Jesus Christ comes with an emphasis on the things of the Spirit-the unseen, permanent things! "What shall it profit a man," says Jesus, "if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Happy are they, they that love God, Whose hearts have Christ confessed, Who by His cross have found their life, And 'neath His yoke their rest.

Glad is the praise, sweet are the songs, When they together sing; And strong the prayers that bow the ear Of Heaven's eternal King.

Christ to their homes giveth His peace,

And makes their loves His own;

But, ah, what tares the evil one

Hath in His garden sown!

Sad were our lot, evil this earth,

Did not its sorrows prove

The path whereby the sheep may find

The fold of Jesus' love.

Then shall they know, they that love Him,

How all their pain is good;

And death itself cannot unbind

Their happy brotherhood.

- Charles Coffin

DISTORTED PERSPECTIVE

ALL too often our perspective is wrong, our sense of values is distorted. We are so occupied with perishable things. We spend precious time on houses and clothes and food and physical comforts. Clothes wear out, and houses fall down, and food is consumed and forgotten. The body which we care for and adorn and make comfortable, dies and goes back to dust. We neglect our souls. They go unfed and uncared for. We are not concerned about them. Yet, they are the only part of us which lives forever.

The Lord Jesus Christ condemned such an attitude when He commanded those who follow Him to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and He promised them that all these needful things should be added unto them. He emphasized the stupidity of spending a lifetime in the

pursuit of wealth and the accumulation of earthly possessions at the sacrifice of more important things when He asked, "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

There are men who think themselves too clever to sell any piece of property without realizing a profit on their investment, but who see a very poor price on their souls. One night of pleasure, one word of approval from godless men, is the pittance for which they sell the immortal part of themselves.

There are women who spend hours every week and more money than they can afford on clothes and beauty treatments who never have a moment for the study of God's Word and the contemplation of His love with which to increase the soul's beauty. While they hang in their closets more dresses than they need, they neglect to provide for themselves a robe of righteousness.

The body goes to dust but the soul lives forever.

The residences which men build for themselves on the earth grow old and deteriorate in value. Fire consumes them; age destroys them. Death comes and takes away the ones who dwell in them. Infinitely more important is a "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

How much happier we would be if, viewing our lives in the light of eternity, we would obey the Word of the Lord, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matthew 6:19-20).

O Morning Star! how fair and bright Thou beamest forth in truth and light, O Sovereign meek and lowly!

Thou Root of Jesse, David's Son, My Lord and Bridegroom, Thou hast won My heart to serve Thee solely!

Jesus! Jesus Fair and glorious, all victorious,

Rich in blessing, Rule and might o'er all possessing!

Thou heavenly Brightness! Light divine!

O deep within my heart now shine,

And make Thee there an altar!

Fill me with joy and strength to be

Thy member, ever joined to Thee,

In love that cannot falter;

Jesus! Jesus Doth possess me; turn and bless me;

Here in sadness Eye and heart long for Thy gladness!

- Philipp Nicolai

ISOLATIONIST

MAN is not self-sufficient. Some men like to think they are, but no one can find in himself the answer to his own hunger of heart and longing of soul. The man who is self-reliant in the sense that he relies solely upon his own skill and strength and power leans upon a weak support, however clever and brilliant he may be. The man who seeks to satisfy the craving of his heart with things finds the hunger still unappeased. Money, land, stocks and bonds cannot meet man's deepest needs. Books, pictures, music-these are not sufficient. Even the man who relies upon friends for the satisfaction of the desire of his soul for companionship and for understanding to meet the problems and sorrows of life finds them insufficient.

The psalmist has expressed the need of men's hearts in the words, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God" (Psalms 42:2). The soul is immortal and only the immortal God can quench its thirst. Jesus Christ spoke about a rich man who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid UP for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19). His barns were full of produce; his crops had been good. He had made his fortune, but he was a fool to attempt to satisfy his soul with those things. The human soul cannot slake its thirst at the wells of the world.

Man can come into a soul-satisfying acquaintance with God only through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God manifest in the flesh. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9), said Jesus Christ. Christ is God revealed and manifest to meet the needs of men. Jesus said of Himself, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). The human heart pants after God as the hart panteth after the water brooks (Psalms 42:1). God's invitation to man is, "Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). As pants the hart for cooling streams When heated in the chase,

So longs my soul, O God, for Thee And Thy refreshing grace.

For Thee, my God, the living God, My thirsty soul doth pine;

O when shall I behold Thy face, Thou Majesty divine!

Why restless, why cast down, my soul?

Trust God; and He'll employ

His aid for thee, and change these sighs To thankful hymns of joy.

Why restless, why cast down, my soul?

Hope still; and thou shalt sing

The praise of Him who is thy God, Thy Saviour and thy King.

- Psalms 42:1-11 in rhyme

ACTIONS SPEAK

JOHN the Baptist, that remarkable man, was thrown into prison by Herod because of his faithful preaching and courageous denunciation of sin. To him in the darkness of the dungeon came various reports about Christ.

And John who had pointed to Jesus and cried with such certainty, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," confused and perplexed and discouraged, now sent to Him from jail, asking, "Art thou he that should come?"

The answer of the Lord Jesus Christ was divinely positive. He did not insist loudly that indeed He was the Messiah nor send a message of rebuke to John because he had presumed to doubt His deity. He answered the question with no declaration of His own Messiahship at all. He said simply, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see" (Matthew 11:4).

John's messengers had had an opportunity to observe the miraculous and divine power of Christ. They had been present as He gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, cleansed lepers, unstopped deaf ears, raised the dead, and preached the Gospel to the poor. What better answer could Christ have given to John's question than the answer of His life and work? Every act of the Lord Jesus proclaimed His deity.

The outward action of a man's life is the best indication of what he really is. The Lord stressed this truth. "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:17-20).

A man is bound to manifest outwardly by his words and his actions what he is in his heart, for out of the heart are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23), and as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7).

Some men say, "It does not matter what my creed is so long as I live right." The truth is that no man who has a bad creed can be a good man. That which a man believes in his heart affects the course of his outward life. James says, "Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works" (James 2:18). The only way the heart of a man is apparent to others is by the works of his life. When the saving grace of God transforms the heart of a man it transforms his life.

Men may scoff at the grace of God and profess to doubt the miracle of the new birth, but skeptics have no answer to the proof of God's power and the evidence of the new birth when it is manifest in a transformed, godly life.

Christian, rise, and act thy creed,

Let thy prayer be in thy deed;

Seek the right, perform the true,

Raise thy work and life anew.

Hearts around thee sink with care;

Thou canst help their load to bear,

Thou canst bring inspiring light,
Arm their faltering wills to fight.
Let thine alms be hope and joy,
And thy worship God's employ;
Give Him thanks in humble zeal,
Learning all His will to feel.
Come then, Law divine, and reign,
Freest faith assailed in vain,
Perfect love bereft of fear,
Born in heaven and radiant here.

- F. A. Rollo Russell

THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING

THIS is the day of the so-called "scientific" mind, the generation of those who must have proof before they will accept a truth. How often do we hear someone say, "I cannot take anything on faith. You have to prove something to me before I believe it." With these words some people explain their refusal to accept the salvation which God offers, since this salvation is by faith.

As a matter of fact, even in the realm of science faith goes before proof. The scientist believes—that is, he has faith - that certain chemicals mixed together will produce certain results. Therefore, in the laboratory he mixes the chemicals to prove by experiment whether the thing he believes is true. A physician has faith that a certain drug has power to cure a disease and because he believes the drug has power he tries the drug in the treatment of the disease.

God asks us to apply this same sort of faith in the realm of the spiritual. His invitation is, "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalms 34:8). All God asks is that we try Him. Such a challenge from the God of the universe to the race which He created should appeal to the "scientific" mind.

When one scientist has definitely demonstrated that a certain fact is scientifically true, other scientists accept his proof and go on from there in their research without having to reprove the truth which he has established.

It is not necessary to establish proof of the fact that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ can change men's hearts and give them new natures. This eternal truth has been proved in the lives of countless thousands. In any other field than the spiritual, the "scientific" mind would accept such overwhelming evidence without a moment's hesitation. Yet in the realm of the spiritual, men not only decline to believe that which has been proved thousands of times by others but they also refuse to make the experiment themselves.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31), says the Bible, but the "modern, wise, and scientific" mind says, "You will have to prove that to me." The proof lies in

believing. When we believe we prove.

Art thou weary, art thou languid, Art thou sore distressed?

“Come to Me,” saith One, “and coming, Be at rest.”

Hath He marks to lead me to Him, If He be my guide?

“In His feet and hands are wound-prints, And His side.” Is there diadem, as Monarch, That His brow adorns?

“Yea, a crown, in very surety, But of thorns.”

If I find Him, if I follow, What His guerdon here?

“Many a sorrow, many a labor, Many a tear.”

If I still hold closely to Him, What hath He at last?

“Sorrow vanquished, labor ended, Jordan passed.”

If I ask Him to receive me, Will He say me nay?

“Not till earth and not till heaven Pass away.”

Finding, following, keeping, struggling, Is He sure to bless?

Saint, apostle, prophets, martyrs, Answer, “Yes!”

- Stephen the Sabaite

DREAMING

JOSEPH was a dreamer. There is nothing wrong with dreaming the right sort of dreams if dreams do not become the whole end of life.

Of course, Joseph's dreams were prophetic. They were sent to him by God as a promise of what he should become. He dreamed that the sun and the moon, representing his father and mother, and eleven stars, representing his brothers, bowed down to his star.

He dreamed that he and his family were gathering grain in the field together and that the sheaves of his mother and father and brethren bowed down to his sheaf. It is interesting and significant that these prophetic indications of the glory that lay ahead of Joseph should have shaped themselves into dreams about such simple things - stars and sheaves of grain. These were the things with which Joseph was familiar and with which he lived. Through the clear Eastern night, as he sat outside his father's tent or kept watch with his brothers over his father's flocks, he became familiar with the moon and stars. Up before day, he had often watched the sunrise. His life was largely occupied with the planting, the cultivation, and the harvesting of crops.

Men's dreams are an indication of their interest and a key to their lives. The things upon which your thoughts dwell indicate what you are. The ambitions which you set for yourself measure the quality of your character. The desires of the heart shape the course of the life. The man who thinks evil thoughts and dreams evil dreams will bring forth a crop of evil deeds.

No wonder, then, that the Word of God admonishes, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Php 4:8).

The man with an impure heart cannot live a pure life. The man whose impulses and desires are sinful will lead a sinful life, but through grace he may receive a cleansing of heart, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Go, dreamer, seek thy dream,

And having found it, hold;

The word has need of dreams

That are not weighed in gold.

Dream high! - and having dreamed,

To thine own dream be true;

Count not the cost, for dreams are things

Worth many a cup of rue. So dream that when the night come

Unto thy brief of days,

A dream goes singing down the winds

Of everlasting ways.

- Florence Wilson Roper

PERSPECTIVE

Two men looking on the same scene behold entirely different things. The story goes that two travelers stood together on a mountain peak looking down into the valley just as the first rays of the sun fired the clouds above which they were standing.

One man exclaimed at the beauty of the scene. The other said, "This is the first time I ever looked down on a buzzard that was flying." One man was enraptured with the beauty of the dawn. The other man saw a buzzard.

What we are influenced what we see. That which occupies our mind shapes our outlook. Looking at a magnificent public building, the architect looks for details of size and proportion and architectural style. The landscape artist notices the shrubbery set against the building. The housekeeper is conscious of the fact that the steps are dirty.

The prophet and his servant were surrounded by their enemies. The servant saw the horses and chariots and the soldiers that had come to take them prisoners. The prophet saw God's horses and chariots and heavenly soldiers. The servant of the prophet was frightened by what he saw. The prophet's vision made him bold and confident, and he prayed for his servant, saying, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17). The Lord heard the prayer and the

servant was given the spiritual vision of the prophet.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Only the man whose heart is pure can see God. The man whose heart is sinful and impure is blind to the presence of God. His sight is so filled with that which is ugly and debased that he has no time to catch a glimpse of the pure and holy. The man who is occupied solely with the temporal and physical cannot be expected to see the spiritual and eternal. "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Blessed are the eyes that see

The things that you have seen, Blessed are the feet that walk

The ways where you have been.

Blessed are the eyes that see The agony of God,

Blessed are the feet that tread The paths His feet have trod.

Blessed are the souls that solve The paradox of pain,

And find the path that, piercing it, Leads through to peace again.

- G. A. Studdert Kennedy

CHRISTENDOM AND CHRISTIANITY

COLUMNISTS and commentators complain that our "Christian civilization" has apparently failed because we have not established equity and brotherhood, justice and peace upon the earth.

Our Western civilization, they declare, has in theory committed itself to the principles set forth in the teachings of Christ, but in fact it has not attained them.

These men have overlooked, as have many other people in these last few years, the fact that there is a difference between Christendom and Christianity, between having accepted the teachings of Christ as the proper basis for ideal human relationships and having become a Christian.

Thoughtful and benevolent men are compelled to recognize in the truths which Christ taught, in the example which He set, and in the instruction which He gave to His disciples, the noblest conception and the finest pattern of life. But the mental acceptance of these things does not make a man a Christian. Nor does the fact that a nation recognizes in its constitution some of the truths which Christ taught make that nation a Christian nation, nor does it establish His kingdom upon the earth. Christ Himself taught definitely that to become a Christian one must be born again (John 3:3).

We do not grow into the kingdom of our Lord. We are born into it by simple trusting faith in Christ and by acceptance of Him as personal Saviour and as Lord of our lives. We do not become Christians when we accept the truth of His teachings. We become Christians when we accept Him, who is the Truth.

We do not hear much preaching these days on the new birth. There is a great need for it. "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7), says Christ, and until a man is born again he has no right to call himself a Christian, however much intellectual assent he may give to the truth of Christ's teachings.

As for attaining a state of absolute equity and justice and final peace upon the earth, that is something we shall never experience until the Prince of Peace Himself comes to reign over the earth. Then the kingdoms of this world will become in reality the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15). The King shall come when morning dawns, And light triumphant breaks;

When beauty gilds the eastern hills,

And life to joy awakes.

Not as of old a little child To bear, and fight, and die,

But crowned with glory like the sun That lights the morning sky.

O brighter than the rising morn When He, victorious, rose,

And left the lonesome place of death,

Despite the rage of foes-

O brighter than the glorious morn

Shall this fair morning be, When Christ, our King, in beauty comes, And we His face shall see!

The King shall come when morning dawns, And light and beauty brings:

Hail, Christ, the Lord! Thy people pray, "Come quickly, King of kings."

-Greek Hymn

FAITH AT REST

SOME people believe Christ. Some believe on Him. When Jesus was here on earth some believed that He was the Messiah. They took Him at His word. Their belief was strengthened by the evidence of the miracles He performed and by the life He lived. They believed Him. But, when He talked about sacrifice and suffering and hardship, they turned back from following Him. They believed Him, but they did not trust their lives to Him nor risk their future to His leadership.

Some people today believe Him to the extent that they accept the words which He spoke as truth. They believe He is the Son of God. They do not doubt His deity. They give intellectual assent to His truth, but they do not commit their lives to Him nor prove that they believe Him by obedience and surrender to His will.

Believing on Jesus is another matter altogether than believing Him.

- To believe on Jesus means to trust Him completely, not only to accept what He said as truth, but also to believe Him enough to commit oneself eternally to His keeping.

- To believe on Him is to make Him, who is the "sure foundation," the foundation on which our lives are built, the center about which the acts and thoughts and ambitions and desires of our lives are

gathered.

- To believe on Jesus means to cling to Him as the support and stay of life.
- To believe on Jesus means that we, conscious of our own weakness, rely on Him and depend upon His truth and power.
- To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ means to depend upon Him as a man escaping from a burning building depends upon the ladder which he descends.

It is to depend upon Him as the pilot of a plane "flying blind" depends upon his instruments and the radio beam.

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). It is not enough simply to believe Him. We must in faith trust ourselves to Him, must believe on Him.

Approach, my soul, the mercy seat, Where Jesus answers prayer;

There humbly fall before His feet, For none can perish there.

Thy promise is my only plea, With this I venture nigh;

Thou callest burdened souls to Thee, And such, O Lord, am I.

Bowed down beneath a load of sin, By Satan sorely pressed,

By wars without and fears within, I come to Thee for rest.

Be Thou my shield and hiding place, That, sheltered near Thy side,

I may my fierce accuser face, And tell him Thou hast died.

O wondrous Love! To bleed and die, To bear the cross and shame,

That guilty sinners, such as I, Might plead Thy gracious Name!

"Poor tempest-tossed soul, be still; My promised grace receive":

'Tis Jesus speaks-I must, I will,

I can, I do believe.

- John Newton

BLINDNESS-GOOD AND BAD

THERE are two kinds of blindness referred to in the forty-second chapter of Isaiah. One is the sort of blindness which the Lord came to heal (Isaiah 42:7). The other is a blindness which the Lord looks upon and finds well pleasing to Him (Isaiah 42:19).

The first is a guilty blindness; the second is a God-honoring blindness.

There are some men who are spiritually blind. They are blind to their true condition. They do not comprehend the fact that they are sinners and need a Saviour. Their eyes have been blinded by the god of this world so that they do not realize that it is impossible for man in his own

righteousness to please God. Instead of seeing their need of the righteousness of Christ they go about to establish their own righteousness (2 Corinthians 4:4). They are blind to spiritual truth.

When Christ comes into life He gives sight. Spiritual darkness and night turn to day. Just as He opened the physical eyes of the blind man beside the road, so He gives spiritual sight to those who cry out to Him. He is the Light of the World, and He floods the life with light.

There is the other sort of blindness. It is blindness to the appeal and attraction of the world.

Some men and women have caught a vision of the face of Christ—a vision so bright that their eyes have been blind to the lights of earth ever since.

- Their gaze is not fixed upon earthly things.
- Their glances are not trapped by the display of earth.
- Their eyes do not feast upon the tinsel of time.
- Their affection is fixed upon things above.

The lust of the eye which is not of the Father but of the world (1 John 2:16) has no power over them.

Their eyes are blind to fleeting, temporal sights. The man who looks long at the sun and then turns his eyes toward a candle flame cannot see it. The Christian whose gaze lingers upon the Light of the World becomes blind to the dim candles of a sinful age.

Walk in the light! So shalt thou know That fellowship of love

His Spirit only can bestow Who reigns in light above.

Walk in the light! And thou shalt find Thy heart made truly His

Who dwells in cloudless light enshrined, In whom no darkness is.

Walk in the light! And thou shalt own Thy darkness passed away,

Because that light hath on thee shone In which is perfect day.

Walk in the light! And e'en the tomb No fearful shade shall wear;

Glory shall chase away its gloom, For Christ hath conquered there.

Walk in the light! Thy path shall be A path, though thorny, bright:

For God, by grace, shall dwell in thee, And God Himself is Light.

- Bernard Barton

TOMBSTONES

JESUS CHRIST, SO kind to sinners and so tender in dealing with human weakness, lashed out in vigorous language of stern reproach against the Pharisees: "Ye are like unto whited sepulchres . . . full of dead men's bones" (Matthew 23:27).

Judged by one standard they were very righteous, but their standard was their own standard, and their righteousness was self-righteousness. They were careful about their outward observance of all the laws and ceremonies. They were careful to observe fasts and often prayed-in public-but all their righteousness was outward. Their religion was a religion of “don’ts” and “do’s.” It was all on the surface.

They vigorously contended for the faith and took pride in its championship, but in their own hearts was no spiritual life. Their souls were corrupt and full of rotteness; their religion was a shell. Without spirituality their religion was not inward life but a garment of practice, clothing the outward man.

The Pharisees are still with us. They were not peculiar to Israel. Christianity today - even the most conservative orthodox Christianity - is blighted by some who have inherited the worst traits of Israel’s self-righteous sect. They are proud of their peculiarities and thankful they are not like other men. They have a head knowledge of the Gospel and an outward practice of its righteousness in which they take great pride. Inwardly there is none of the abundant life of Christ, none of His passion for lost men, none of His love for sinners. They judge other men and women on the basis of the standards which they themselves have set up and their judgments are harsh and cruel and un-Christlike.

The man who is born of God will manifest in his outward actions, in his daily life, the indwelling life which he possesses, and his whole life will be warm and sweet. The outward practice will be right because the inward man is right, and through every relationship of his life will shine the light and warmth of God’s Spirit which dwells within his heart. There will be none of the coldness and hardness and self-righteousness of the Pharisee. There will be in his life none of the coldness of marble monuments covering the corruption and death in the Pharisee’s heart. Is there ambition in my heart?

Search, gracious God, and see;

Or do I act a haughty part? Lord,

I appeal to Thee.

I charge my thoughts, be humble still, And all my carriage mild,

Content, my Father, with Thy will, And quiet as a child.

The patient soul, the lowly mind Shall have a large reward:

Let saints in sorrow lie resign’d, And trust a faithful Lord.

- Isaac Watts

A PRICE TO PAY

IT IS always wise to ask oneself, “To what results will this course of action lead me?”

A consideration of the consequences rarely precedes the deed which ultimately produces a tragedy. One who considers the inevitable results of sin will pause before rushing headlong to his destruction.

- Playing with fire, the boy does not behold in advance the charred and smoking ruins which will result from his carelessness.
- Taking his first drink, the youth does not see in the glass the reflection of the red-eyed drunkard he will become.
- Juggling his expense account or misappropriating a few dollars, the young businessman fails to consider the humiliation and tragedy looming ahead on the road of dishonesty as it leads him toward gray prison walls.

This is an important question, "What effect will this act have on me today?" but definitely more important is the question, "What will be the final result of this act?"

In the time of the Prophet Jeremiah the nation of Judah had almost completely forgotten God. Enamored of the idolatry of neighboring countries, nobility and common people alike had become corrupt and wicked. Moral conditions were growing worse all the time. But, in those days, as always, God had a faithful few who did not follow the popular trend.

Jeremiah was one of these. Alarmed by the blindness of the people to the impending national destruction, crying out against the popular sins of his day, he sought to warn them of the results of their course of life.

Watching the people listen gladly to false prophets who promised peace and prosperity and blessing, Jeremiah asked them this question: "What will ye do in the end?" He lived to see the answer to his own question. In the end their city was destroyed. In the end they were slain or taken captive.

Sin always brings destruction in its wake. You may seem to get by with the violation of God's law today, but the "wages of sin is death." You may hide your sin from others now, but what will you do in the end when you come to stand in the presence of God, from whom nothing is hid? The day of wrath, that dreadful day,

When heaven and earth shall pass away!

What power shall be the sinner's stay?

How shall he meet that dreadful day?

When, shriveling like a parched scroll,

The flaming heavens together roll;

And louder yet, and yet more dread,

Swells the high trump that wakes the dead.

O on that day, that wrathful day,

When man to judgment wakes from clay,

Be Thou, O Christ, the sinner's stay,

Though heaven and earth shall pass away!

- Walter Scott

TWO THRONES

THE picture in the book of Revelation of men standing before a great white throne being judged for the deeds done in the body is dramatic and terrifying. Men and women are crying for the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the throne. Those who rejected the grace of God and refused His salvation are gathered, small and great, before His judgment seat. The Bible speaks of another throne. It is called "the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). They who approach this throne now will never have to stand before the other throne- the throne of judgment. The judgment throne is to be set up in the future. The throne of grace is now established.

Men will come before the judgment throne full of fear. Men approach the throne of grace with confidence. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need," said Paul. This throne of grace is a place of blessing-"the mercy seat"-and there is a reason for the boldness with which we may approach it.

The sinner needs salvation. He can boldly plead the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That blood sprinkles the mercy seat. The blood was shed for his sin. God promises forgiveness of sin to all who trust in Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). A sinner may rely boldly upon the promise of! God and at the throne of grace obtain forgiveness of his sin.

Here He will restore to fellowship the Christian who has been unfaithful and fallen into temptation. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9), and here we find power and victory in the time of temptation, grace to help in time of need.

Sweet is Thy mercy, Lord;

Before Thy mercy seat.

My soul, adoring, pleads Thy word, And owns Thy mercy sweet.

My need and Thy desires Are all in Christ complete;

Thou hast the justice truth requires, And I Thy mercy sweet.

Where'er Thy Name is blest, Where'er Thy people meet,

There I delight in Thee to rest, And find Thy mercy sweet.

Light Thou my weary way, Lead Thou my wandering feet,

That while I stay on earth I may Still find Thy mercy sweet.

Thus shall the heavenly host Hear all my songs repeat

To Father, Son and Holy Ghost, My joy, Thy mercy sweet.

-John S. B. Monsell

REJECTED DIAGNOSIS

SOME people do not want to be told the truth. There is many a mother who does not want to be told the truth about her child. Her son is a neighborhood nuisance, a cheat, and a liar, but you could not get her to believe it. "He is a good little darling, and so badly misunderstood," she will say.

There are some people who do not want the truth about their talents. I once knew a woman who thought she had great gifts as a singer and that she possessed a marvelous voice. She sang off key and her voice was most unpleasant, but no one-not even her vocal teacher-could make her believe it. She thought she was a great singer, and she would not listen to anyone who tried to tell her the truth about how bad a singer she was.

There are people who will not believe the truth about their physical condition. Their physicians recognize serious symptoms and warn them that they must take care of themselves, but they will not believe the doctors or follow their advice.

But there are infinitely more people who will not believe the truth about their spiritual condition.

Men do not like to admit that they are sinners or that they need a Saviour. Full of self-righteousness, they refuse to accept the truth of God's Word when it says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). They are quite satisfied with their own spiritual condition and do not welcome the diagnosis of Almighty God.

How sad that men prefer falsehood to fact, that they welcome wrong and reject right, that they turn from truth to error. How melancholy the condition of those who change the truth of God into a lie (Romans 1:25). The Lord Jesus came to the Jews proclaiming His deity, announcing His Messiahship. They rejected His claims and refused to accept Him. He told them the truth about Himself and the truth about themselves, and they did not believe either. "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not" (John 8:45), He said.

When we recognize the truth of His deity, we must also acknowledge our own sinfulness. If He is as He claimed to be, the Truth, we must believe Him when He says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Lord of all pow'r and might,

Father of love and light,

Speed on Thy Word:

O let the Gospel sound

All the wide world around,

Wherever man is found;

God speed His Word.

Lo, what embattled foes,

Stern in their hate, oppose

God's holy Word:

One for His truth we stand,
Strong in His own right hand,
Firm as a martyr band;
God shield His Word.
Onward shall be our course,
Despite of fraud or force;
God is before;
His Word ere long shall run
Free as the noonday sun;
His purpose must be done;
God bless His Word.

- Hugh Stowell

THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR

THERE is no tragedy like the tragedy of a missed opportunity.

The world is filled with people who are failures because they failed to take advantage of an opportunity. There are men who had a chance to get an education, but who failed to avail themselves of it and who, therefore, have never been able to realize their full possibilities since their minds are untrained and their talents undeveloped. There are others who failed to grasp opportunities suddenly thrust upon them whereby they might have secured fortune and prominence. Shakespeare has this to say about opportunities:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Some men are more fortunate than others. They neglect the first opportunity, and they are given another. To some men opportunity after opportunity is offered and none are taken advantage of.

Saddest of all neglected opportunities is the opportunity of salvation. God gives a man an opportunity to prepare for eternity, and he neglects it. Sometimes in His divine mercy innumerable opportunities are offered, but there comes a time when the last opportunity slips by and a soul goes into eternity unprepared and without hope.

"When asked to trust Christ as their Saviour some say, "Not today; another time." They squander this opportunity and impose on God for another. The Word of God says, "Behold, now is the

accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). There is now an opportunity. Tomorrow there may not be one. Life is uncertain and God's opportunities are fleet of wing. The wise man seizes the present opportunities.

The bodies of some of the men who lost their lives in the attack of the Japanese upon Pearl Harbor were recovered from the sunken vessels.

One of the Red Cross nurses helping to prepare the bodies for burial came upon the corpse of her own brother. In his hand was clasped his New Testament. In the back was printed, "I accept the Lord Jesus as my own personal Saviour," and in the blank provided underneath, the young man had signed his name.

The nurse took the Testament and underneath his name she wrote her own, signifying that she had accepted her dead brother's Christ, thankful that he had seized his opportunity to prepare for eternity, and determined not to miss hers.

Lo! on a narrow neck of land,

'Twixt two unbounded seas, I stand, Secure, insensible:

A point of time, a moment's space,

Removes me to that heavenly place, Or shuts me up in hell.

O God, mine inmost soul convert,

And deeply in my thoughtful heart Eternal things impress:

Give me to feel their solemn weight,

And tremble on the brink of fate, And wake to righteousness.

Be this my one great business here,

With serious industry and fear Eternal bliss to insure;

Thine utmost counsel to fulfill,

And suffer all Thy righteous will, And to the end endure.

Then, Saviour, then my soul receive,

Transported from this vale, to live And reign with Thee above,

Where faith is sweetly lost in sight,

And hope in full, supreme delight, And everlasting love.

- Charles Wesley ~ end of chapter 2 ~

01.03. I Am The Door

“I Am The Door”

(John 10:9)

CHAPTER THREE

ONLY ONE DOOR

“I AM the door,” said Jesus (John 10:7). He was not talking about the door of a beautiful palace. He was not speaking of the great doors of the Temple in Jerusalem. He had no lofty portals in mind. “I am the door of the sheep-fold,” He said. How amazing is the humility and condescension of the Lord, that He who is the God of glory should describe Himself in such humble, simple terms! He was talking to men who knew the habits and customs of sheep and shepherds. The sheep entered the fold at night for safety and protection from wild beasts. He was describing Himself, therefore, as the door to safety and security.

He is the means of entrance into the safety of eternal life. He is the only way by which men may enter. Some are trying to go in through good works. By their own efforts they are trying to climb a wall too high for them to top. Some try to enter through the practice of the Golden Rule, some by way of church membership, but Christ says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

There are no armed guards to keep poor ordinary folk out. There are no alms boxes fastened to the portal. No fine clothes are necessary. No cards of admission are demanded. Christ has described Himself as a door so humble that no man need feel too poor and vile to pass through. It is a low door, so low that a man cannot go through with his head held high. The stiff neck must bow if he would pass through this door.

We enter into salvation through Christ. We do not merit it. We cannot deserve it. We simply step through the Door by faith. There are not a half-dozen ways out of sin into eternal life. There is only one Way.

Christ is not a door. He is the Door-the Door by which any man may enter in.

Thou art the Way: to Thee alone From sin and death we flee;

And he who would the Father seek Must seek Him, Lord, by Thee.

Thou art the Truth: Thy Word alone True wisdom can impart;

Thou only canst inform the mind, And purify the heart

Thou art the Life: the rending tomb Proclaims Thy conquering arm;

And those who put their trust in Thee Nor death nor hell shall harm.

Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life;
Grant us that way to know,
That truth to keep, that life to win,
Whose joys eternal flow.

-George W. Doane

FOUR DIMENSIONS

GOD'S love is four-dimensional. It extends through time and space. Paul speaks of the length and the breadth and the depth and the height of the love of God as that which passeth knowledge (Ephesians 3:18-19). It is so wonderful, so profound, so remarkable that the human mind cannot comprehend it, understand it, or analyze it.

God's love is long. It is as long as eternity. From before the foundation of the world God loved man yet uncreated. In the mind of God a plan was made for man's redemption. We are told that Jesus Christ was as a Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). God's love is eternal, unailing. Whom He loves He loves unto the end.

It is a broad love. It is broad enough to include all men of every age and race and condition. God's love embraces the most unattractive and the most unlovely. It is a love as broad as "whosoever," for God's love sent His Son "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16), and the invitation is: whosoever will, let him come (Revelation 22:17).

God's love is deep-deep enough to reach down into the depths of man's need and man's depravity. It is extended down to the poor sinner who needs forgiveness and salvation from sin.

God's love is high-higher than the thoughts of man can soar, higher than the dreams of man can reach, high enough to raise a man to sonship with God. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God," John cries (1 John 3:1).

It is a love so high that it can raise a sinner to eternal fellowship with the Most High God. It is as high as heaven itself, for it puts redeemed sinners on golden streets.

No wonder that it passeth knowledge-this love that manifests itself so perfectly in Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us! Any man who could understand the love of God could understand God, for God is love (1 John 4:16).

O love of God, how strong and true,
Eternal, and yet ever new;
Uncomprehended and unbought,
Beyond all knowledge and all thought.
O heavenly love, how precious still,
In days of weariness and ill,

In nights of pain and helplessness,
To hear, to comfort, and to bless!
O wide-embracing, wondrous love, We read thee in the sky above;
We read thee in the earth below, In seas that swell, and streams that flow.
We read thee best in Him who came
To bear for us the cross of shame,
Sent by the Father from on high,
Our life to live, our death to die.
O love of God, our shield and stay
Through all the perils of our way;
Eternal love, in Thee we rest,
Forever safe, forever blest.

-Horatius Bonar

WORDS! WORDS! WORDS!

IT WAS Spurgeon who said, "That which lies in the well of your thought will come up in the bucket of your speech."

The Bible states the same truth more simply: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). A man shows what he is by what he says. It was said of Jesus Christ, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). That He was the sinless Son of God was proved by His words. Never an inaccurate or false word fell from His lips. He spoke with the voice of divine authority and the power of His words proved the power of the Speaker. The word of the Lord of life brought forth a dead man from the tomb. The word of the omnipotent God of the universe silenced the tempest and calmed the sea. The word of the sinless Son of God cast out demons from the bodies of men and His word defeated Satan who sought to tempt Him in the wilderness.

His word revealed a measure of values beyond the conception of the mind of sinful man. These were the standards He set: that greatness abounds in service; that man's chief concern should not be in the accumulation of things; that outward appearance is not so important as the inward heart.

The most brilliant word of the greatest philosophers of the generations, the highest truths uttered by the founders of the religious systems of the world dim when compared with the glorious light of His utterances.

Others suggest paths of ethical conduct and try to point out a way of life. Only God's Son says, "I am the way."

Others are seekers after the truth and professed teachers of it. Only Jesus Christ says, "I am the truth."

Others offer suggestions as to how to secure the most from life. Only Jesus Christ says, "I am the life."

Others with phrases of their philosophy attempt to enlighten the minds of men. Only Jesus Christ says, "I am the light of the world."

Wisdom of God, we would by Thee be taught;
Control our minds, direct our ev'ry thought;
Knowledge alone life's problems cannot meet;
We learn to live while sitting at Thy feet.
Light of the world, illumine us we pray;
Our souls are dark without Thy kindling ray,
Torches unlighted, of all rad'ance bare.
Touch them to flame, and burn in glory there!
Incarnate Truth, help us Thy truth to learn,
Prone to embrace the falsehood we would spurn,
Groping in error's maze for verity;
Thou art the Truth we need to make us free.
Unfailing love, we are so cold in heart,
To us Thy passion for the lost impart;
Give us Thy vision of the need of men;
All learning will be used in service then.

- Bob Jones, Jr. THE MAGNETISM OF THE CROSS

MANY years ago in England a man named Dodd wrote a commentary on the Bible.

He was later convicted of a crime and sentenced to execution. After he had been hanged, the publishers realized that they could not sell a commentary under his name, and so they asked another learned gentleman, Dr. Coke, to sponsor the work, and it was published with his name prominently displayed on the flyleaf.

It is natural that a man who was hanged should leave behind him such an unsavory reputation that the people would not be attracted to his commentary on the Bible.

But what the gallows is in our modern day, such was the cross in the time of Christ. It was looked upon as we look upon the gibbet, not merely as an instrument of death, but as a sign of ignominy and disgrace. Crucifixion was the form of death reserved very largely for criminal slaves. To be sentenced to death upon the cross was to be marked with the stigma of crime and disgrace.

But note the wonders of God's supernatural grace and power! That very form of death which in the natural course of events would cause men to turn away in disgust or remember with repugnance the victim, is, in the case of the Lord Jesus, the very thing which attracts men to Him. He has forever glorified the instrument which would have debased another. Because He suffered on the cross, millions reverence the cross. It is lifted on church steeples, worn as ornaments.

Because He was lifted up upon the cross, men and women are attracted to Him. On the cross He revealed the fullest measure of God's love for sinners. In the humiliation of His death He showed Himself most royal. In His suffering, naked, bleeding, and physically repulsive, He appears most divinely attractive.

It is through the preaching of the Gospel of His atoning death that sinners find forgiveness and men are drawn to Him, who said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). In the cross of Christ I glory, Towering o'er the wrecks of time;

All the light of sacred story Gathers round its head sublime. When the woes of life o'ertake me, Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,

Never shall the cross forsake me;

Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

When the sun of bliss is beaming Light and love upon my way,

From the cross the radiance streaming Adds more luster to the day.

Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, By the cross are sanctified;

Peace is there, that knows no measure, Joys that through all time abide.

-John Bowring

"IT IS FINISHED"

"IT IS finished" (John 19:30). Thus Christ hanging on the cross cried with a loud voice before He gave up the ghost. The agony of the crucifixion was over-the awful suffering first under the heat of the sun, and then in the darkness which God drew like a curtain about Calvary. He had hung there, racked with pain. He had been mocked and insulted. Now the time of release was come. Into His Father's hands He commended His spirit and died (Luke 23:46).

But more was finished than the physical suffering. Redemption's work was done. He had finished paying the penalty of sin. He had finished the task which would make sinful man acceptable to a sinless God. He had completed the work of salvation. There was nothing more which could be done.

He had suffered, the Just for the unjust.

Some men do not realize how completely it was finished. There are those who still try to work out salvation for themselves. They are trying to make themselves acceptable unto God by good deeds. When they sin, they seek to counterbalance that by an act of righteousness, hoping that God will take account of the good and overlook the bad. They labor fruitlessly, seeking to

accomplish that which cannot be done “for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). They seek to do what has already been done - the work of salvation. Christ on the cross finished that work.

Our salvation depends not upon what we do but upon what He has done. When we accept Him as our Saviour, when we by faith identify ourselves with Him, we are saved, for He “bare our sins in his own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). They were atoned for when He died. We are forever free from their guilt. Nothing remains to be done about them. He took care of every sin when He died. Forever and eternally “it is finished”!

Cross of Jesus, cross of sorrow,
Where the blood of Christ was shed,
Perfect man on thee did suffer,
Perfect God on thee has bled!
Here the King of all the ages,
Thron'd in light ere world could be,
Robed in mortal flesh is dying,
Crucified by sin for me.
O mysterious condescending!
O abandonment sublime!
Very God Himself is bearing
All the suffering of time!
Evermore for human failure
By His passion we can plead;
God has borne all mortal anguish,
Surely He will know our need.

- James S. Simpson

FREEDOM FOREVER

POSSIBLY none of the words of Christ are more often quoted than these: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). They lend their beauty to many a political speech and many an educational lecture. They gleam like brilliant gems amid the rubbish of many a sterile sermon. They are engraved on the walls of university libraries and carved over the doors of college chapels.

In one sense there is freedom in all truth. However, truth is arrived at in two different ways. Some truth comes by discovery; some truth by revelation. The scientist in his laboratory, by experiment

and research, may discover truths in the realm of science. The biologist, the botanist, or the chemist may discover truths of natural law and use these truths to free man from the scourge of disease. The archaeologist may uncover truths from buried civilization and free men from false ideas about nations long since vanished. By the trial and error method many may attain to truth, and truth brings freedom from error.

Spiritual truth, however, comes by revelation from God Himself. God, who in Himself is the embodiment of all truth, reveals Himself to man in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. The truth of man's lost condition, the truth of the life hereafter, the truth of the Person and love of God is revealed in the Bible, the Word of God. Truth which man discovers for himself frees him from error, but only the truth which God reveals frees man from sin and its power and its penalty. The mind of many by searching cannot discover God, and only God in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is able to strike off the shackles of habit and sin and weakness which bind man body and soul. This eternal freedom which evades human discovery but comes as the gift of divine revelation is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. He who said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," said of Himself, "I am the truth"; and only God's Son frees man from self, from his own sinful passions and tendencies, and from the condemnation of his sin.

Wonderful words, these, "The truth shall make you free," but completely realized only in Christ, the Incarnate Truth. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Lord of all being, throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star;
Center and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!
Sun of our life, Thy quickening ray
Sheds on our path the glow of day;
Star of our hope, Thy softened light
Cheers the long watches of the night.
Our midnight is Thy smile withdrawn;
Our noontide is Thy gracious dawn;
Our rainbow arch Thy mercy's sign;
All, save the clouds of sin, are Thine!

Lord of all life, below, above, Whose light is truth, whose warmth is love, Before Thy ever-blazing throne We ask no luster of our own.

Grant us Thy truth to make us free,
And kindling hearts that burn for Thee,
Till all Thy living altars claim

One holy light, one heavenly flame.

- Oliver W. Holmes

A SURPRISED CONGREGATION

WHEREVER He was on the Sabbath, it was the custom of Christ to worship at the house of God. On one particular Sabbath (Mark 1:21-34) He amazed the congregation at the synagogue in Capernaum where He taught, because He spake with authority and not as the scribes to whom they were accustomed. But Christ did not only speak with authority; He demonstrated His authority-the authority of Deity Himself-by casting out an unclean spirit from a member of the congregation.

The deity of Christ is clearly and explicitly taught and emphasized in the Word of God, and Christ Himself repeatedly, as on this occasion, by His miraculous power demonstrated His deity.

When the demon was cast out of the man we are told that the congregation was "all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? What new doctrine is this?"

The demonstration of the eternal truth of His deity so amazed them that in their ignorance of the teaching of the Scripture they thought some new doctrine was being set forth.

- It is possible to be in the house of worship and have an unclean spirit.

- It is possible to be a member of a church and a regular attendant at church worship and not be right of heart.

All the ethical teaching and philosophy and emphasis on doctrine which the Church has to offer cannot cast out an unclean spirit, cannot give a man a newness of heart. Only the divine Christ is able to perform a regenerating miracle in the life of an individual. Church attendance is valuable and important. Christ Himself sets the example of attendance on public worship, but it is possible to come away from public worship still a slave to sin, unclean and lost. Only a personal meeting there or elsewhere with the Lord Jesus Christ and the acceptance of His divine authority as Lord and Saviour can accomplish the miraculous in the life of the individual.

Come, sinners, to the Gospel feast;

Let every soul be Jesus' guest;

Ye need not one be left behind,

For God hath bidden all mankind.

Sent by my Lord, on you I call;

The invitation is to all:

Come, all the world! Come, sinner, thou!

All things in Christ are ready now.

Come, all ye souls by sin oppressed,

Ye restless wanderers after rest;
Ye poor, and maimed, and halt, and blind,
In Christ a hearty welcome find.
My message as from God receive;
Ye all may come to Christ and live:
O let His love your hearts constrain,
Nor suffer Him to die in vain.
See Him set forth before your eyes
That precious, bleeding sacrifice!
His offered benefits embrace,
And freely now be saved by grace.

-Charles Wesley

HURRAHS -HISSES!

THOSE few days from the triumphant entry of the Lord into Jerusalem to His crucifixion afford all the proof we need of the fact that popularity is a fleeting thing and that unregenerate man is a fickle and depraved creature.

- When Christ entered Jerusalem He was acclaimed and applauded by the multitude. When He went out He was spat upon and jeered at by the mob.

- He rode into Jerusalem over the garments spread out before Him by the enthusiastic crowd. He went out of Jerusalem bearing a cross.

- As He was welcomed into the city they cried, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." As He was led out of the city they cried, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him."

- He was received into the city as if He were a conqueror and a king. He was led out of the city as if He were a malefactor and a criminal.

- When He came into Jerusalem, palm branches of victory were waved in salutation before Him. When He went out of Jerusalem, a crown of thorns was placed on His brow in mockery.

- He entered the city from the Mount of Olives surrounded by enthusiastic and admiring throngs. He went out of the city to the mount of execution, a condemned prisoner under guard.

So overwhelming was the enthusiasm of His reception into Jerusalem that the Pharisees, His enemies, said, "Behold, the world is gone after him." So unpopular was He a few days later that not even the Roman governor, who found Him innocent, dared to risk the displeasure of the mob by setting Him free.

Our Lord, as He rode into Jerusalem amid the hosannas of the excited populace, knew they would reject and crucify Him. He had come into the world to die upon the cross, and the infinite Son of God was not deceived by the momentary swell of apparent popularity that greeted Him that day.

The Lord Jesus Christ knows all about the shallow and changeable human heart. He knows the fickleness of popular favor and the faithlessness of human friends. He saw a false friend betray, a trusted friend deny, cowardly friends follow afar off or flee in the hour of His trial.

It is a common occurrence in the history of a fallen race for fame to fade, friends to fail, and applause to die away, but the Lord Jesus Christ changes not nor faileth ever. He says in the hour of our loneliness and dejection and disappointment as in the time of joy and success and triumph, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." He is the one Friend who "sticketh closer than a brother," "the same yesterday, today, and for ever," infinite in love and compassion and understanding to all who trust in Him.

Come, says Jesus' sacred voice,

Come, and make My paths your choice;

I will guide you to your home,

Weary pilgrim, hither come!

Thou who, houseless, sole, forlorn,

Long hast borne the proud world's scorn,

Long hast roamed the barren waste,

Weary pilgrim, hither haste.

Ye who, tossed on beds of pain,

Seek for ease, but seek in vain;

Ye, by fiercer anguish torn,

In remorse for guilt who mourn-

Hither come! for here is found

Balm that flows for ev'ry wound,

Peace that ever shall endure,

Rest eternal, sacred, sure.

-Anna L. Barbauld ~ end of chapter 3 ~

01.04. Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also

“Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also”

(John 14:19) CHAPTER FOUR

CONTRASTS OF THE CHRIST

IT IS impossible to imagine any contrasts more definite than those which the Scripture makes between what the Lord Jesus Christ was and what He became.

He was God. John tells us, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). He became man. “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Hebrews 2:16). The most high God, the Creator of all things, took upon Himself the form of man, the creature.

He was the Lord of life. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Php 2:8).

He was the Master and Lord of the universe. “By him all things consist” (Colossians 1:17). But, He who was the Master became the servant. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matthew 20:28).

He was rich. All the riches of creation were His. John says, “Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11). But, “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). He walked the earth without a home or any possessions aside from the garments which He wore.

He was altogether lovely, the “rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys” (Song of Solomon 2:1), the fairest of ten thousand to the soul. But on the cross He became misshapen and horribly marred. “His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14), and Isaiah spoke prophetically of His terrible appearance in the hour of crucifixion when he wrote, “He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2).

What amazing contrasts! But no more amazing than the contrast of the hatred of sinful man for Him and His love for sinful man.

Because He loved man, Christ became man, laid aside His glory, became poor, suffered death upon the cross. He, the God who loved so greatly the creatures which He made, was rejected and spurned and crucified by the very ones He came to save.

“Unto you is born this day a Saviour,”

Which is Jesus Christ, the wondrous Lord;

Not a “teacher,” not a “good example,”

But the Son of God, the Living Word.
No "philosopher," his fancies weaving,
Warp of dreams and woof of visions vast,
Not a "prophet," peering down the future,
Not a "scholar," delving in the past.
"Unto you is born this day a Saviour."
Shine, O star! and shout, O angel voice!
Unto you this precious gift is given;
Sing, O earth! and all ye heavens, rejoice!
Long the world has waited such a Saviour,
Sunk in sin and torn by fear and doubt;
Long in darkness groped for truth and wisdom;
Glory, glory, now the light shines out!
"Unto you is born this day a Saviour."
Earth's one hope, the Life, the Truth, the Way;
Mighty God and glorious Redeemer,
Jesus Christ the Lord is born today.

- Annie Johnson Flint

CORDS OF LOVE

IT WAS Robert E. Lee who said, "Duty is the sublimest word in the English language." But though her name may be sublime, Duty's demands may be harsh and burdensome. "Must" is an unpleasant word. It sometimes speaks of harsh necessity. Jesus Christ said, "The Son of man must be lifted up" (John 12:34). God's Son must be nailed to the cross. Yet there was no drawing back from the obligation, no shirking the necessity.

- He must be lifted up because He loved, and love, eager to save poor sinners, made His death necessary.

- He must die because He loved. His submission to the will of God and His love for men were tangent at the cross.

- Not only in obedience to God's will, but also impelled by His love for sinners, He must die.

Christ's death fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament, but Jesus did not have to die because prophets had foreseen His death. The prophets foretold His death upon the cross because He must die upon the cross. Jesus Christ was as a "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world"

(Revelation 13:8).

In obedience to the will of the Father and because He loved men and willed to redeem them He must die. He had to die. It was necessary that the Son of Man be lifted up because the Son of Man came into the world to save sinners, and He must go to the cross to do the work of salvation. Because He was God, and God is love, He had to suffer.

He went to the cross willingly. He was bound to the tree not by the nails which impaled Him upon the beam. The God who hid in the earth the iron from which the nails were forged and made the tree of the cross grow from its seed could not have been held by the nails upon the wood against His will. He was bound there by the cords of His own divine love. He gave His life. No man took it from Him (John 10:18).

Thy habitation is eternity, Oh, high and holy One, who fillest space,
Yet Thou didst deign to leave Thine own abode And make with sinful man Thy dwelling place.
Thou, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, To fleeting days and constant strife came down.
And Thou didst walk with men and share their toil, And feel their weariness and shed their tears;
Thou, mighty Counsellor, didst speak Thy words Of heaven's wisdom unto foolish ears;
And Thou wast patient with their ignorance, Their stubbornness, their pride, their unbelief;
Thou who art Life didst yield Thyself to death, Thou, pure and sinless, hung beside a thief.

- Annie Johnson Flint

GOD OR NOT GOOD

UPON what charge was Jesus Christ sentenced to death; for what crime was He crucified? The answer is quite plainly stated in the Gospels; for making Himself equal with God, for claiming to be the Son of God.

The Jewish priests and the leaders of the people hated Christ because of His influence over the common people. They were jealous of His popularity. Their antagonism against Him was aroused because His holy eyes detected the hypocrisy of their own evil hearts and in words of truth and power He denounced them.

They were determined to get rid of Him and in a trial which was one long mockery, He whose death they had predetermined upon was sentenced to die.

Either Jesus Christ is the Son of God or He was a fraud and an impostor and a blasphemer. The charges against Him were true. He had claimed to be God's Son. He identified Himself with the great God of eternity when He took to Himself the Name of the great eternal I AM, saying, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

Seated at the well of Samaria and talking to the woman of Sychar about the Messiah that was to come, He declared, "I that speak unto thee am he" (John 4:26). Asked by the high priest at the trial, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63), Christ answered, "Thou hast said," meaning, "As thou hast said, I am."

We are faced with this alternative: either Jesus Christ is God's Son or He was a blasphemer and a man who claimed to be that which He was not. No one can say logically that Jesus was a good man and nothing more. Either He is more than a good man-the God He claimed to be-or He was a deceiver and a wicked man. My dear Redeemer, and my Lord,

I read my duty in Thy Word;

But in Thy life the law appears,

Drawn out in living characters.

Such was Thy truth, and such Thy zeal,

Such deference to Thy Father's will,

Such love, and meekness so divine,

I would transcribe and make them mine.

Cold mountains and the midnight air

Witnessed the fervor of Thy pray'r;

The desert Thy temptations knew,

Thy conflict and Thy victory, too.

Be Thou my pattern; make me bear

More of Thy gracious image here;

Then God, the Judge, shall own my name

Among the followers of the Lamb.

- Isaac Watts

KING OF KINGS

"JESUS of Nazareth the king of the Jews." This title written by Pilate was nailed to the cross upon which Christ died. Pilate, evidently angered at the insistence of the Jewish leaders upon the death of Christ, and possibly ashamed of his own weakness in giving way to them, in the words of the inscription jested at the Jews. The leaders of the people sent back a request to Pilate that the title be altered to read, "He said, I am King of the Jews" (John 19:21), and Pilate in his abrupt and angry reply, "What I have written I have written," betrayed his motive in setting up the inscription above the head of the Crucified. He implied by his words, "Behold this poor creature. He is a king, and over what a poor people does he reign!" As the reed placed in His hand was a mock scepter, as the crown of thorns upon His brow was a mock diadem, so Pilate by the inscription made the cross a mock throne.

Judah rejected her King but nowhere was He more kingly than upon the cross, and because He hung there in agony He shall someday sit upon the throne of David. He who endured the cross, despising the shame, shall reign over all nations. The brow crowned with thorns shall wear a

diadem. The hand that held the reed and was nailed upon a cross shall grip a rod of iron and a scepter of power. Pilate wrote more truthfully than he knew that day.

He is the King of the Jews, but the inscription was incomplete. God's full inscription will be written on His vesture and His thigh when He comes again in power to rule not Judah alone, but all the nations of the world as "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16). My God, I love Thee, not because I hope for heaven thereby,

Nor yet because, if I love not, I must forever die.

Thou, O my Jesus, Thou didst me Upon the cross embrace:

For me didst bear the nails, and spear, And manifold disgrace.

Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,

Should I not love Thee well? Not for the hope of winning heaven,

Nor of escaping hell;

Not with the hope of gaining aught, Not seeking a reward;

But as Thyself hast loved me, O ever-loving Lord!

So would I love Thee, dearest Lord,

And in Thy praise will sing;

Solely because Thou art my God,

And my eternal King.

- Francis Xavier

PERFECT OBEDIENCE

IT SEEMS strange to think of a God who is all powerful being compelled to do any certain thing. Yet the omnipotent God is by reason of His own righteousness compelled to a certain course. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Genesis 18:25).

- Because God is infinitely good, He cannot do evil.

- Because He is wholly righteous, God must be just.

- Because He promises, He must perform.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, as He moved among men on several occasions, said, "I must." Incarnate Deity was bound by His own perfection to do the perfect will of the Father.

Coming into Jericho one day, Jesus stopped under a sycamore tree, into which a man, "little of stature," had climbed so that he might see Him over the heads of the crowd gathered around Him. Looking up, Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house" (Luke 19:5).

Why must He? Because it was the will of the Father that Zacchaeus be saved. Jesus Christ had come into the world to save sinners. He was on His way to the cross to die for a lost world. His face was set like flint to go up to Jerusalem to die, but that day for a little while He must dine with Zacchaeus, so that Zacchaeus might feast with Him in glory.

There is no way to measure obedience.

Obedience must hold in small things as well as in great or the perfection of obedience is shattered. God's truth is consistent in small matters as in great ones. Duty demands obedience in little tasks as well as in great deeds. Nothing is too trivial to be brought under the dominion of God's will. The obedient man knows that God not only orders the course of his whole life, but that each step is also definitely planned and directed (Psalms 37:23).

Jesus Christ exclaimed, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me" (John 4:34). Because the Father willed it, He said that day in Jericho, "Zacchaeus . . . I must abide at thy house." When mother-love makes all things bright,

When joy comes with the morning light,

When children gather round their tree, Thou Christmas Babe, We sing of Thee!

When manhood's brows are bent in thought,

To learn what men of old have taught,

When eager hands seek wisdom's key, Wise Temple Child, We learn of Thee!

When doubts assail and perils fright,

When, groping blindly in the night,

We strive to read life's mystery, Man of the Mount, We turn to Thee! When shadows of the valley fall

When sin and death the soul appall,

One light we through the darkness see, Christ on the Cross,

We cry to Thee!

And when the world shall pass away,

And dawns at length the perfect day,

In glory shall our souls made free, Thou God enthroned, Then worship Thee!

- Tudor Jenks

REMEMBERING OTHERS

THE character of our Lord Jesus Christ is nowhere more perfectly demonstrated than on the cross. He who died for sinners did not even in suffering on Calvary forget His own. He made provision for His mother and His friend, and what a tender provision it was! He had nothing on earth to give them. He died without property or possession.

- Though He made all things, He had no lands to leave.
- Though He, in creation, had hidden the gold in the hills, He died without money.

Even His robe had been taken from Him and the soldiers were casting lots for it in the shadow of the cross. He had nothing of material value to leave to His mother and not even a keepsake to bequeath to His friend, so He gave them to each other-to the heartbroken mother, a son, upon whom the affection of a mother's heart could be lavished; to John, a mother, whose heart was capable of all the devotion a mother possesses.

His divine compassion showed itself in His prayer for those who crucified Him. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). His enemies, His tormentors, His persecutors came within the embrace of His divine compassion in the prayer.

It was not until He had made provision for His loved ones and prayed for His enemies that He thought of Himself. Then He cried, "I thirst" (John 19:28). Only thus does He give voice to the suffering of the flesh. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb" (Isaiah 53:7), so He through the trial and the agony of the past hours had opened not His mouth in complaint or protest. The incarnate God gave only this brief cry to indicate the awful suffering of His flesh.

Was there ever anguish like His anguish? Yet was there ever one who died thus? His deity was so apparent as He died that the centurion in charge of the crucifixion was compelled to cry out, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

O love divine, that stoop'd to share
Our sharpest pang, our bitt'rest tear,
On Thee we cast each earth-born care,
We smile at pain while Thou art near.
Tho' long the weary way we tread,
And sorrow crown each ling'ring year,
No path we shun, no darkness dread,
Our hearts still whisp'ring, "Thou art near."
When drooping pleasure turns to grief,
And trembling faith is chang'd to fear,
The murm'ring wind, the quiv'ring leaf,
Shall softly tell us Thou art near.
On Thee we fling our burd'ning woe,
O love divine, forever dear,
Content to suffer, while we know,

Living and dying, Thou art near.

- Oliver W. Holmes

“IF’S” AND “BUT”

IF CHRIST be not risen from the dead, we can put no faith in the Bible as the true Word of God. If He be not risen, then Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are all dealers in falsehood, and Paul is a deceiver and not to be trusted, for all these “have testified of God that he raised up Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:15).

If Christ be not risen from the dead, the preaching of the apostles was vain and empty, founded on a quicksand of deceit or misunderstanding.

If Christ be not risen from the dead, all those who have preached the Christian doctrine of the resurrection in the succeeding nineteen centuries have been deluded. They have dreamed idle dreams without foundation, and spoken words of empty beauty void of truth.

If Christ be not risen from the dead, then all the dead of all the centuries sleep a soundless sleep from which there is no awakening. The night of death will never be shattered by the dawn of the resurrection day. They have been deceived by a mirage without substance who lie down to die looking forward to a resurrection from the dead.

If Christ be not risen from the dead, no man can stand in God’s sight freed from sin and a possessor of eternal life. If He be not the Lord of life returned alive from the tomb, He is a mere man, dust these many generations and unable to impart life to the dusty dead of time.

“But now is Christ risen” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

There can be no doubt of that glorious fact. The reliable witnesses who saw Him after His resurrection, to whom He talked, who touched Him, who accepted food from His hand and ate it, give indisputable evidence that He is risen. The power of His resurrection life imparted to the lives of trusting thousands through all the years since that Easter Day attests His resurrection. “Now is Christ risen,” and from His lips sounds the promise of resurrection to all who die in Him. To all His own, sleeping beneath the green of earth’s valleys, the snows of its hillsides or the gray waves of its oceans, He speaks, “Because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19).

I know that my Redeemer lives;

What joy the blest assurance gives!

He lives, He lives, who once was dead;

He lives, my everlasting Head!

He lives, to bless me with His love;

He lives, to plead for me above;

He lives, my hungry soul to feed;

He lives, to help in time of need.

He lives, to grant me daily breath;
He lives, and I shall conquer death;
He lives, my mansion to prepare;
He lives, to bring me safely there.
He lives, all glory to His Name;
He lives, my Saviour, still the same;
What joy the blest assurance gives,
I know that my Redeemer lives!
- Samuel Medley ~ end of chapter 4 ~

01.05. I Know Whom I Have Believed

“I Know Whom I Have Believed”

(2 Timothy 1:12) CHAPTER FIVE

SATISFACTION IN KNOWLEDGE

GREAT satisfaction is found in knowledge. To know thoroughly one’s business or profession brings a sense of self-confidence. “Knowledge is power.” We like to say with authority, “I know,” but there are some people who spend their time wondering about things of which they could easily be sure.

Are you saved?

“I don’t think you can know about that until after you are dead,” you may reply. “I hope I am saved.” But you can know.

The Bible is definite on the subject of salvation, and on the authority of God’s Word you can know whether you are saved or not. “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31). God cannot lie, and the man who meets God’s conditions can be assured that God keeps His promises. Jesus said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). If you have come in faith to Christ and trusted Him as your Saviour, you can be sure that He saves you.

A long time ago somebody said, “Christianity is not a hope-so religion; it is a know-so religion.” God would have men know whether or not they are saved. The Bible is full of warning to the sinner. God wants the sinner to know that abundant salvation is found in Jesus Christ so that he will turn to Christ and pass from death to life. God desires that the Christian have full assurance of his salvation and be able to say with conviction, “I know I am saved!”

Paul did not have any doubt about the matter. He said, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Every Christian can be just as positive as Paul since God’s Holy Spirit indwelling us testifies to the reality of our salvation. “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16).

How can a sinner know His sins on earth forgiven?

How can my gracious Saviour show My name inscribed in heaven?

What we have felt and seen, With confidence we tell;

And publish to the sons of men The signs infallible.

We who in Christ believe That He for us hath died,

We all His unknown peace receive, And feel His blood applied.

Exults our rising soul, Disburdened of her load,

And swells unutterably full

Of glory and of God.

-Charles Wesley

SEVENFOLD UNION

CHRIST and the believer are joined together in an association and relationship as wonderful as it is blessed. There are seven points in which the Christian is associated with his Lord.

The Christian is crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). When Christ died on the cross He paid our death penalty there. Christ hung there for us and in God's sight we were crucified with Him.

The Christian is quickened together with Him (Ephesians 2:5). The believer is alive with Christ. This is what Paul meant when he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Php 1:21). We are possessors of His eternal life. Because He lives, we live also (John 14:19).

The Christian is raised together with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). We are raised from the death of sin to walking in newness of life. When Christ rose from the tomb the resurrection of every child of God was as assured as if he had himself already risen.

The Christian is seated together in heavenly places with Christ (Ephesians 2:6). We enjoy heavenly privileges now: fellowship and communion with Him. We who are members of the body are represented in heaven by Christ who is the Head of the Church, and while we are yet here in the body on the earth, we are present in Him in the Court of Glory.

The Christian is a joint-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17). He is the heir of all things and He is our Elder Brother. We share in the family possessions. His heritage is jointly ours.

The Christian suffers with Christ (Romans 8:17). This is one phase of our relationship with Him which many of us would like to avoid, but the suffering which touches one member of a family touches all the family. No portion of the body suffers to itself and upon our relation with Christ in suffering depends our relation with Him in glory.

The Christian will be glorified together with Christ (Romans 8:17). Amazing mercy, love beyond our comprehension, that He who is worthy of all glory sees fit to share it with us who deserve none!

Reality, reality,

Lord Jesus Christ Thou art to me!

From the spectral mist and the driving clouds,

From the shifting shadows and phantom crowds,

From unreal words and unreal lives,

Where truth with falsehood feebly strives;
From the passings away, the chance and change,
Flickerings, vanishings, swift and strange,
I turn to my glorious rest in Thee, Who art the grand Reality!

Reality, reality,
Lord Jesus Christ is crowned in Thee,
In Thee is every type fulfilled,
In Thee is every yearning stilled
For perfect beauty, truth and love:
For Thou art always far above
The grandest glimpse of our Ideal,
Yet more and more we know Thee real,
And marvel more and more to see Thine infinite reality.

Reality, reality,
Lord Jesus Christ Thou art to me!
My glorious King, my Lord, my God,
Life is too short for half the laud,
For half the debt of praise I owe,
For this blest knowledge that "I know
The reality of Jesus Christ"-
Unmeasured blessing, gift unpriced!

Will I not praise Thee when I see In the long noon of eternity Unveiled, Thy "bright reality"?

- Frances Ridley Havergal

THE END OF THE SEARCH

IT IS a strange thing how often people accuse other folk of doing the very thing of which they themselves are guilty. Zophar, one of the three men who came to "comfort" Job at the time of his sorrow and poverty, thought he knew all there was to know about God, yet he accused Job of being guilty of this same presumption and asked him, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" (Job 11:7).

Man by searching can find out much about God. The physical universe reveals a great deal of the power and skill and wisdom of the Almighty. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the

firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge” (Psalms 19:1-2).

- The ordered regularity of the movements of the heavenly bodies reveal to the searching telescope of the astronomer the attribute of perfection which God possesses.
- The complexities in the patterns of nature speak of the infinite wisdom of God.
- The workings of God’s moral law proclaim His justice.

God “plants His foot upon the sea and rides upon the storm,” and the searcher finds everywhere in creation evidence of Deity.

Finding out the Almighty to perfection is another thing. But Christ is the end of that search. The man who finds Christ finds the only perfect revelation of God. “He that hath seen me,” said Jesus, “hath seen the Father” (John 14:9), and in Christ is found the only perfect revelation of Deity in all His attributes. “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

He is God Incarnate, and the man who finds Christ finds God perfect in power, perfect in love, perfect in wisdom.

Job, looking forward with the eyes of faith through the years and seeing Him, exclaimed, “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25-26).

When we find Christ we find God, and having our faith fixed on Him who is God the Redeemer, we share Job’s assurance that some day, when our bodies have been transformed into the likeness of His glorious body, then in our flesh we shall see God.

Majestic sweetness sits enthroned Upon the Saviour’s brow;

His head with radiant glories crowned, His hps with grace o’erflow.

He saw me plunged in deep distress;

He flew to my relief;

For me He bore the shameful cross, And carried all my grief. To Him I owe my life and breath, And all the joys I have;

He makes me triumph over death;

He saves me from the grave.

To heaven, the place of His abode, He brings my weary feet;

Shows me the glories of my God, And makes my joy complete.

Since from His bounty I receive Such proofs of love divine,

Had I a thousand hearts to give, Lord, they should all be Thine.

-Samuel Stennett

THE SERENITY OF SURRENDER

THE Lord Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). The man or woman whose faith is fixed in Him will be filled with a sense of complete confidence no matter how much conditions around him change. As the Prince of Peace, Christ is able to give peace of mind to those whose lives and thoughts are centered in Him.

The Christian should be unaffected by the variations in emotional temperature which occur around him. With a faith which is constant and unchanging, he walks serene amid the change and chaos of the world around. He maintains an inward peace however noisy the tumult and bloody the war which shakes the earth around him. When others are afraid he maintains the same restful attitude of trust which he felt when outward conditions were settled and quiet. He lives in the world but inwardly he is unaffected by its changing currents of thought, its seething emotions, its vain ideas. He is not swept off his feet by the current of popular opinion. His faith is fixed in a God who is eternal; his feet are set on the Rock of Ages. The secret of maintaining such a state of life as this is found in the words of Isaiah: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee” (Isaiah 26:3). The man whose mind is constantly occupied with the affairs of this world, whose affection is fixed upon temporal things, is bound to be affected by the loss of earthly possessions and the changing conditions which give them changing values. Paul says to the Christian, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2). Both life and peace are the possession of the man who is spiritually minded (Romans 8:6).

Jesus, the very thought of Thee With sweetness fills the breast;

But sweeter far Thy face to see, And in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, nor heart can frame, Nor can the memory find

A sweeter sound than Thy blest Name, O Saviour of mankind!

O Hope of every contrite heart!

O Joy of all the meek!

To those who ask, how kind Thou art!

How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah! this No tongue nor pen can show:

The love of Jesus, what it is, None but His loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou, As Thou our prize wilt be;

In Thee be all our glory now,

And through eternity.

-Bernard of Clairvaux

UNDER TO

MY LITTLE two-year-old son had been learning Bible verses, which he recited at the time of family prayer each day. One morning he essayed Luke 18:16, which he quoted in this fashion: "Suffer the little children to come under to me."

That is not an accurate quotation, but as a reflection of the spirit and manner in which one must come to Christ it is very accurate indeed. Not only a little child but also the man or the woman who comes to Christ comes under to Him.

- The man who is saved placed himself under the blood which Christ shed for man's redemption.
- Surrender to the Lord Jesus means coming under His dominion, bringing oneself under allegiance to Him.
- The surrendered believer takes upon himself the yoke of Christ and bows his shoulders under His burden.

The Lord tells us His yoke is easy and His burden is light, but no yoke can be placed on a neck that is not bowed and no burden can be carried on a back unbent.

No man can be saved until he recognizes himself as a sinner and is conscious of his need of salvation. The proud of heart and the haughty of spirit must be humbled and brought low if he is to experience the saving grace of God.

It is by simple, trusting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that men are redeemed. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children," says Christ, "ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Trusting Christ,

- We serve under His leadership;
- We fight under His banner;
- We rest under His love;
- We trust under His power.

Our sins are under His blood; our lives are under His care; our wills are under His command. Coming to Christ, we come out from under the guilt of sins, from under the wrath of God, which abides on the unbeliever (John 3:36).

When we come to Christ it is a coming "under to" Him. Our wills, our lives, our thoughts, and our duties are brought into captivity to the Lord Jesus. We are subjects under His sway, whom we acknowledge as the King of our lives.

I am coming to the cross;

I am poor and weak and blind;

I am counting all but dross:

I shall full salvation find.

Here I give my all to Thee, Friends and time and earthly store;
Soul and body Thine to be,
Wholly Thine forevermore.
Gladly I accept Thy grace;
Gladly I obey Thy Word;
All Thy promises embrace, O my Saviour and my Lord.
I am trusting, Lord, in Thee, Blessed Lamb of Calvary;
Humbly at Thy cross I bow,
Seeking Thy salvation now.

- William McDonald

I DO NOT KNOW

THERE is much I do not know; there is much I cannot know.

- I do not know what a day may bring forth.
- I do not know what tomorrow has in store for me.
- I do not know what will be the outcome of the things I undertake.
- I do not know where the path of life may lead me before I reach its end.
- I do not know where sorrow awaits along the way or where death lurks.
- I do not know where I may come across something which I would like to escape.
- I do not know when I may be afflicted with sickness or disease.
- I do not know when I may be called upon to pass through a fiery trial or when tragedy may strike.
- I do not know when a loved one may be taken away or when I shall be called to join those who have gone before.
- I do not know why sorrows come into our lives.
- I do not know why innocent people are called upon to suffer for the sins of others.
- I do not know why things which I desire are denied me nor why things which I would avoid are thrust upon me.
- I do not know how the flesh can stand the suffering which it is sometimes called upon to endure.
- I do not know how the soul can go through the waters deep and chill, which threaten to engulf it.
- I do not know how to reconcile God's love for men with the terrible tragedy and suffering which Divine Providence visits upon them.

But, I do not need to know what, nor when, nor how, nor why, because I do know “whom I have believed” (2 Timothy 1:12).

I know God. In the Lord Jesus Christ I find Him perfectly revealed. The God I know is a God of love. His love is manifest in the death of Christ on the cross for our sins. He loved us and gave Himself for us.

The God I know is wise. He is the Author of all wisdom and all knowledge. He knows the end from the beginning. The God I know is omnipotent. He upholds “all things by the word of his power.”

I can trust Him who is Himself perfect love and power and wisdom. He knows what I need and understands what is best for me, and He will not permit anything else to come into my life. He is able to give me strength to face whatever may come into my life. Do you know Him?

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto Me and rest;

Lay down, thou weary one, lay down Thy head upon My breast.”

I came to Jesus as I was, Weary and worn and sad;

I found in Him a resting place, And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Behold, I freely give

The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down and drink, and live!”

I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream;

My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “I am this dark world’s light;

Look unto Me; thy morn shall rise, And all thy day be bright!”

I looked to Jesus, and I found In Him my star, my sun;

And in that light of life I’ll walk, Till traveling days are done.

-Horatius Bonar HE KNOWS HIS OWN

IN Westminster Abbey on the tomb of Britain’s “unknown soldier” of the First World War is carved a portion of 2 Timothy 2:19 : “The Lord knoweth them that are his.”

The Bible teaches that a sinner lost and undone, without hope here and hereafter, by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour becomes a child of God, a member of the family of God.

- Just as a father knows the names of his children, so the Lord knows the names of those who belong to Him.

- As a shepherd can identify his sheep though they may be mixed with a strange flock, so the Divine Shepherd identifies the sheep of His flock wherever they may be among the kindreds and tribes and nations of the world.

This verse brings great comfort to God's people in times of trial.

When war strikes, families are separated, sons go off to battle, homes are broken by the invader and parents lose contact with children, but in the midst of all the turmoil and chaos and confusion, the Lord still knows His own. To whatever spot they may have been removed His eye has followed them. In a world that has been cursed with war upon war, amid the destruction of armies, God's eye has seen as His own have fallen on the field of battle. Amid the carnage on the seas He has watched as His children have gone down to death in the deep waters. He has watched planes speeding through the flaming air and has seen the fall of His own to the earth.

Just as the Lord called His friend Lazarus by name, bidding him come forth from the grave, so on some glorious day the dead in Christ shall rise at the sound of His voice speaking to His own, "Come forth!" God's family will someday be united; but now scattered over the earth He knows them that are His, and He keeps watch also even above the scattered dust of His sleeping children. The Lord knows them that are His and in all the darkness of bloody days standeth God within the shadows keeping watch above His own.

Lord, it belongs not to my care Whether I die or live;

To love and serve Thee is my share, And this Thy grace must give.

If life be long, I will be glad, That I may long obey;

If short, yet why should I be sad To soar to endless day?

Christ leads me through no darker rooms Than He went through before;

He that into God's kingdom comes Must enter by this door.

Come, Lord, when grace has made me meet Thy blessed face to see:

For if Thy work on earth be sweet, What will Thy glory be!

My knowledge of that life is small, The eye of faith is dim;

But 'tis enough that Christ knows all, And I shall be with Him.

- Richard Baxter GOD'S MEMORY

GOD manifests His grace and goodness in the things which He remembers.

A man whose life has been sinful and vile, who has on his soul the guilt and weight of all kinds of sin, trusts Christ as his Saviour and his guilt is washed away in the blood of the cross. God says to the poor sinner who has been saved by grace concerning his sins that He will remember them against him no more forever. Not only is the guilt washed away, not only is the burden lifted, not only are the sins forgiven-as far as God is concerned, they are forgotten as well.

This is what God forgets for the one who by faith in Christ becomes a child of God: the deeds of his sinful past. But the God who is so merciful in His forgetting is gracious in His remembering, too, for He never fails to keep a record of the good deeds and kind words of His children. He remembers them to reward them. Even the giving of a cup of cold water in His Name He does not forget.

The book of Malachi tells us that “they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him” (Malachi 3:16).

The God of the universe sets down in the record the kind things which people who love Him say about Him. One day those who have been saved by grace through faith will stand before Him, not to be judged for the sins they committed before they were saved, for God has completely forgotten them, but they will stand before Him to receive a reward and He in that hour will recall to mind all that they have done and said for love of Him. Not one word will be forgotten, not one deed will be unremembered, but each shall have its reward.

“But gather all My saints,” He cries, “That made their peace with God,

By the Redeemer’s sacrifice, And seal’d it with His blood.

Their faith and works brought forth to light Shall make the world confess

My sentence of reward is right, And heaven adore My grace.”

- Isaac Watts

SECRETS SHARED

GOD came to visit Abraham and Abraham was host to God Himself. This occasion is described in Genesis 18:1-33. In the likeness of man, the Lord and two angelic companions appeared to Abraham one day as he sat in the door of his tent. The hospitable patriot made them rest themselves in the shade while he washed their feet and set food before them. After the visit, Abraham went with them to bring them on their way toward Sodom. As the two angels went on toward the condemned city, the Lord Himself lingered behind to talk over His plans with his friend Abraham, saying, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” (Genesis 18:17).

What a wonderful privilege to entertain the Lord! What a glorious experience to share with Him the secrets of His omniscient mind. Yet, while we envy Abraham the intimacy and fellowship of this occasion, we forget that it is a privilege which we may enjoy. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

The Lord still tells His friends the things which He is going to do. In the Word He still declares to us not only His plans for the world but also the things which He is preparing for those who love Him. Christ says to us, “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). He reveals the judgments and the destruction which He will pour out on this world of iniquity and sin as He revealed to Abraham that His wrath was to be poured out in fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah.

God would not have His child ignorant of His plans. He wants us to know that the dead shall be raised again, that the throne of the Lord shall be established in this earth, that every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, that when He shall reign the redeemed shall reign with Him. As much as our finite minds can comprehend of His divine purpose and plans, He tells us and for our joy assures us that beyond all we can

comprehend, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Nor eye has seen, nor ear has heard, Nor sense nor reason known

What joys the Father has prepar'd For those that love the Son.

But the good Spirit of the Lord Reveals a heaven to come:

The beams of glory in His Word Allure and guide us home.

Those holy gates forever bar Pollution, sin and shame;

None shall obtain admittance there But followers of the Lamb.

He keeps the Father's book of life,

There all their names are found; The hypocrite in vain shall strive

To tread the heavenly ground.

- Isaac Watts

REPAYMENT IN ACCEPTANCE

IT IS impossible for any man to repay God for His goodness. Man has no gifts to offer God but those with which God has endowed him. Everything in the universe belongs to the God who made all things. The wealth of mines, expanse of fertile fields, all that makes a man rich, supports life, or delight the eye comes as a gift from the Creator. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45). He "giveth to all men liberally" (James 1:5). Man has nothing to offer God since all belongs to God anyway and has merely been poured out on man from the bountiful hand of a loving Creator.

The psalmist, feeling the impossibility of requiting God for His goodness, cries out, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalms 116:12). Then he answers his question in these words: "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord" (Psalms 116:13). Man cannot repay God for His goodness. The only offering which he can make in return is one of thankful acceptance. To accept the gift with a heart full of praise and love for the Giver is the only way that man can in any degree recompense God. God gives because He loves. Thankful acceptance springing from a heart of love is the only return Deity desires for His gifts.

The greatest of all God's gifts is the gift of His Son. Accepting Him as Saviour, the thankful heart of a redeemed sinner takes the cup of salvation. Hard of heart and thoughtless and inconsiderate is the man who accepts God's gifts without calling upon His Name in thanksgiving. Hard of heart indeed is the man who despises God's love and rejects His greatest gift-Jesus Christ.

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew,

He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;

It was not I that found, O Saviour true;

No, I was found of Thee.

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea,
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold,
As Thou, dear Lord, on me.
I find, I walk, I love, but, O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul;
Always Thou lovedst me.
- Anonymous ~ end of chapter 5 ~

01.06. Search Me, O God

“Search Me, O God”

(Psalms 139:23) CHAPTER SIX

GHOSTS DO NOT WALK

TWICE the disciples thought Jesus Christ was a ghost. The first time they were in a storm on the sea and they beheld Him walking on the water (Matthew 14:25-26). The second time the disciples, still unconvinced of His resurrection, were gathered in the upper room where He suddenly appeared in their midst (Luke 24:36-37).

What a strange and stupid thing that the disciples should twice take refuge from the miraculous in the superstitious, supposing they beheld a ghost rather than accepting the manifest evidence of their own eyes - that He Himself stood before them!

How much more logical on the first occasion to believe that the One who made the water should use it for a highway! How much more reasonable the second time to accept the evidence of His physical presence in the wound prints in hands and feet and side!

At the root of this strange and stupid attitude was lack of faith and hesitancy to accept that which was, from the standpoint of human reasoning, impossible. Having seen Christ perform many miracles, they should have accepted these miraculous manifestations of His power over natural law and over death without surprise, but such was not the case.

Christ said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” This is nothing impossible for omnipotent Deity. The man who recognizes an omnipotent God has no trouble believing in the miraculous. When our minds limit Deity, naturally our hearts will lack faith.

Men question the historical accuracy and the inspiration of the Bible because it recounts miraculous happenings which they are unwilling to accept. Grant that God is able to do all things and there is no room for doubts as to the authority and accuracy of His Word. Men accept the foolish and impossible evolutionary theory of the creation of life because they limit God. They refuse to recognize a Deity who by the Word of His omnipotence created the universe and made man in His own image. Because men limit God’s power they, like the disciples, saying, “It is a spirit,” believe a theory full of obvious errors and manifest impossibilities rather than accept the Genesis statement of simple truth having Divine Omnipotence as its foundation.

The God who made the universe, who hung the world on nothing and the North on the empty space, is certainly able to perform the miracles recorded in the book of Jonah. The God who created all material things could certainly turn water into wine and feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes.

Behold the blind their sight receive;

Behold the dead awake and live;
The dumb speak wonders, and the lame
Leap like the hart, and bless His Name.
Thus doth th' eternal Spirit own
And seal the mission of the Son;
The Father vindicates His cause
While He hangs bleeding on the cross.
He dies; the heavens in mourning stood;
He rises, and appears a God;
Behold the Lord ascending high,
No more to bleed, no more to die.
Hence and forever from my heart
I bid my doubts and fears depart,
And to Those hands my soul resign
Which bear credentials so divine.

-Isaac Watts

ASKING FOR A RAISE

SOMETIMES as we study the life of the Saviour we overlook the sorrows which His friends must have caused Him. The disciples were so slow to understand the truths He sought to teach them. They were greedy for preferment and place. They were such poor representatives of His perfection and love. They protested so much and did so little. In the hour of His betrayal and suffering they forsook Him or followed afar off.

One of the saddest examples of the disciples' lack of sympathy and understanding of the Saviour is recorded in the tenth chapter of Mark (Mark 10:32-45). There we are told, "He took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him." He wanted them to understand that in Jerusalem, to which they were now going, He would be delivered unto His enemies, condemned to death, crucified. Just as Christ finished describing the anguish and sorrow which lay ahead of Him, James and John spoke up asking for the positions of highest importance and greatest glory in His kingdom. These two disciples had their minds so occupied with their own greedy ambitions that they seem not to have heard at all the words of the Lord. In the very moment when He was describing the suffering which He must endure they were asking for honor and glory.

With this attitude of heart and with minds so preoccupied, it is no wonder that the disciples failed to understand the truths Christ spoke concerning Himself and His redemptive work. It is no wonder that the death of Christ on the cross left them feeling that everything was at an end. It is no wonder

that the resurrection seemed to take them by surprise. They listened so half-heartedly, so absent-mindedly to the words of the Saviour as He showed them the suffering and the cross and the open tomb which lay ahead.

Their minds were on the kingdom and power for themselves. Their selfish dreams and ambitions shut from their consciousness the necessity of the cross. Even Peter, who seems at least to have listened when the Lord foretold His death, cried out, "Be it far from thee, Lord" (Matthew 16:22). The disciples had not learned the lesson that suffering must come before glory and that through the low gateway of anguish and death leads the path to a throne.

O for a heart to praise my God, A heart from sin set free,
A heart that always feels Thy blood So freely spilt for me!
A heart resigned, submissive, meek, My great Redeemer's throne;
Where only Christ is heard to speak, Where Jesus reigns alone;
A humble, lowly, contrite heart, Believing, true, and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part From Him that dwells within;
A heart in every thought renewed, And full of love divine;
Perfect, and right, and pure, and good, A copy, Lord, of Thine!
Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above;
Write Thy new name upon my heart, Thy new, best name of love.

- Charles Wesley

THE PARALYSIS OF FEAR

FEAR! HOW it grips the human heart! How it paralyzes with cold terror! But for the Christian it is an emotion that never need be felt. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Fear and a sound mind are not found together. Fear makes a man act with unreasoning instinct, not with the logical accuracy of sound thought. Possessed by it, the mind cannot function accurately and clearly. But love and a sound mind are a natural combination. Love stimulates life. Love motivates action and thought along the highest planes. Pure love can move men to the finest of creative effort and artistic endeavor and tireless activity.

Fear can become man's greatest enemy. Shakespeare said, "Cowards die many times before their deaths. But the valiant never taste of death but once." Love is an ally that never knows defeat. Even death itself holds no terrors when love is by one's side.

The child of God is called to the "spirit of love," and he who lives up to that high calling is freed from the bondage of fear for "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

If we have experienced the love of God fully there is no room left in the heart for fear. "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and resting in Him all is calm and confidence. However alarming external conditions may be, however dreadful may appear the circumstances with which one is surrounded, the Christian trusts unafraid in the love of God.

That God loves us is evident. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). A God who loves so greatly is not a God who will permit anything to come into the life of His child except what is best for him. An all-wise God surely is a competent judge of what is best! As a child trusts the love of his mother and leaves the problems of his little life to her solution, so may the Christian trust his life to the keeping of a loving God.

We may not understand God's choices for us now. We may not know why He permits some things to cross our paths. We may not comprehend His perfect will when the clouds hide the sun and the smoke of war darkens our sky. But with "a sound mind" and perfect confidence, God's child rests in "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge" (Ephesians 3:19).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.
Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of My command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as Thou goest all shall be made plain,
One step thou seest-then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.
Stand not in fear thy adversaries counting, Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting; For I, the Strong, will open up the way.
Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more Than just to know, where'er the future find thee,
In all thy journeying I go before.

- Selected

A GOOD DEED FOR THE DAY

A MAN who commits a wrong act—who lies, or steals, or murders—is guilty of sin. There is another kind of sin, however, which most of us commit and of which we are rarely conscious. This is not the sin of doing something wrong, but the sin of failing to do something which is right—the sin of omission.

Some sins are not things we do. Some sins are things we “don’t”! Such sin often springs from carelessness, selfishness or indifference, and the child of God is as frequently guilty of this kind of sin as is the unconverted man. We have an opportunity to say a word which will bring comfort into a heart heavy with grief and we fail to take advantage of the opportunity. We fail to take the time to help another who is burdened and perplexed. We fail to be generous to those who are in need. Oftentimes we fail in these things because we are self-centered and unconcerned and fail to notice the need.

The Bible says, “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

We do wrong often, but we fail to do right more often! Those are guilty of the sin of omission to whom the King when He comes in His glory shall say, “For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat . . . naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me” (Matthew 25:42-45).

The Word does not record their having added to the load or increased the burden of those in sickness and in sorrow and in prison. Their sin was the sin of failing to lift the load and ease the burden.

There are very few of us who do not need to pray with honest hearts, “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done. And there is no health in us.” The bread that bringeth strength I want to give, The water pure that bids the thirsty live;

I want to help the fainting day by day;

I’m sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give the oil of joy for tears, The faith to conquer crowding doubts and fears, Beauty for ashes may I give away, I’m sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give good measure running o’er,

And into hungry hearts I want to pour

The answer soft that turneth wrath away;

I’m sure I shall not pass again this way.

I want to give to others hope and faith,

I want to do all that the Master saith;

I want to live aright from day to day,
I'm sure I shall not pass again this way.

- W. R. Fitch

THE WHITE FLAG

DISCOURAGEMENT is the great enemy of achievement. We start out with much enthusiasm and when we do not immediately see the results or if the obstacles are greater than we anticipated, the temptation is to say, "Well, I cannot do it anyway," and give up.

Most of us are tempted by discouragement to quit. Oftentimes the difference between the man who is a failure and the man who is a success is that one yields to the temptation and the other resists it. This holds not only in the struggle for material things, for fame and knowledge, but also in the struggle to live a victorious Christian life.

We grow weary in well-doing.

It was discouragement which caused Elijah under the juniper tree to pray for death. "It is enough," he said, referring to the opposition of the rulers of Israel to his message and the power of the priests of Baal and the hardness of heart of the people. "It is enough," he said, meaning, "I have had all I can stand. I cannot take any more." Any man who tries to accomplish anything for God in the world feels like making the prophet's wail a duet by blending his cry with the discouraged Elijah's "It is enough." This is the cry of a weary body and a tired mind and a heavy heart. It is the cry of the man who has given up the struggle with the goal unachieved or who is despondent because of the difficulties and trials that harass him. It is the cry of surrender, of defeat and failure.

But there is another cry of victory and fulfillment, the peal of triumph when the job is done. This is the cry of the Lord on the cross when He saw man's redemption accomplished and the price of sin paid. "It is finished" (John 19:30).

This is no languid sigh. It is a shout of triumph. What an example of perseverance to the end we find in this and the circumstances which went before it! "He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51) to die. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7) beneath the blows of the lash, the jeers and the persecution and the piercing of the thorny crown. He never hesitated. He "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). There is no word of complaint, but at the end the shout of victory. How much better the cry, "It is finished," when the task is completed, than the sigh, "It is enough," when the work is only half done.

"'Tis finished!" so the Saviour cried,
And meekly bowed His head and died;
'Tis finished! yes, the race is run,
The battle fought, the victory won.
'Tis finished! all that heaven foretold

By prophets in the days of old,
And truths are opened to our view
That kings and prophets never knew.
'Tis finished! Son of God, Thy power
Hath triumphed in this awful hour,
And yet our eyes with sorrow see
That life to us was death to Thee.
'Tis finished! let the joyful sound
Be heard through all the nations round;
'Tis finished! let the triumph rise
And swell the chorus of the skies!
- Samuel Stennett

WORDS WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

THERE are many wonderful lessons for us in the book of Job. It is great drama and great literature. As one of the books in the inspired Word of God it is a source of truth and blessing, but in this modern day its riches are often left unexplored.

Job was a prosperous man who honored God. Satan charged that he served the Lord because it paid him. God, to prove Job's faithfulness, granted Satan permission to afflict him. His children were killed; his property was swept away; he was afflicted with a loathsome disease.

Friends came to commiserate with him, but their conversation was a source of irritation to Job and their "comfort" mocked him. They professed great wisdom about spiritual matters and great understanding of the way in which God worked, but their philosophy was full of falsehood and their arguments stupid and ill conceived as they attempted to convince Job that he suffered because he had committed some secret sin. "Who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?" (Job 4:7), they asked, and even Job himself was convinced that God had not dealt justly with him.

Finally, God's voice sounded from the whirlwind, "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job 38:2). The conceit of man in questioning the wisdom of God was challenged with the question, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4).

How well might these two questions be addressed to some in our twentieth century who are full of opinions without knowledge. The very air is blue with the empty words of self-important men. Listening to them talk, one would think they knew better than Almighty God how to run the world. They offer advice about problems of which they have no comprehension. They darken counsel "by words without knowledge."

Hearing people, even Christian people, question the goodness and wisdom of God in His dealings with them and with the world which He has made, one cannot help wishing that the Voice out of the whirlwind would ask again, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

O Thou Eternal One! whose presence bright

All space doth occupy, all motions guide;

Unchanged through time's all-devastating flight;

Thou only God! There is no God beside!

Being of all beings! Mighty One!

Whom none could comprehend and none explore;

Who fillest existence with Thyself alone:

Embracing all, supporting, ruling o'er-

Being whom we call God, and know no more!

In its sublime research, philosophy May measure out the ocean deeps, may count The sands or the sun's rays; but God! For Thee There is no weight nor measure: none can mount Up to Thy mysteries. Reason's brightest spark, Though kindled by Thy light, in vain would try To trace Thy counsels, infinite and dark, And thought is lost ere thought can soar so high, Even like past moments in eternity.

- Derzhavin

WANTS AND WISHES

"BUT, Daddy, I need it," said the little boy. He had asked his father for chewing gum. His father had said teasingly, "Why should I give it to you, Jimmie?" Jimmie wanted the gum so much that he thought he needed it.

There are many folk like Jimmie. They confuse their wishes with their needs. Some things it would be nice to have are not at all necessary. Things we think essential to our life and happiness we discover we can do very well without.

God has promised His children that He will supply their needs. The Bible says to the Christian, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Php 4:19). But that is not enough for some of us. We wish to see our wants supplied also, and we feel that God neglects or forgets us when He does not give us exactly what we want when we want it. We have enough to eat, and enough to wear, and much more, but we want our own favorite nonessential, too. Like Jimmie, we "need" our chewing gum.

Our lives would be much happier if we would trust our Heavenly Father to give what is best and let Him decide what things we need. His judgment in such matters is better than ours. Jesus Christ said, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of" (Matthew 6:8).

This does not only include temporal things like food and clothes. It covers also our spiritual need, the need of strength in the time of temptation, of comfort in the time of sorrow, of inner peace in the time of war. As God's child you may not only have the great joy of trusting your Father with the assurance in your heart that He will supply your needs, but you may also enjoy freedom from the responsibility of deciding what the needs are. All needs are met in Jesus Christ. Only He is able to save from sin and every man needs salvation. In Him are also wisdom and knowledge and power. Having Him, we have all needful things beside. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). THE BLIND CHILD

I know what Mother's face is like, Although I cannot see;

It's like the music of a bell;

It's like the roses I can smell- Yes, these it's like to me.

I know what Father's face is like;

I'm sure I know it all;

It's like his whistle on the air;

It's like his arms which take such care And never let me fall.

And I can tell what God is like- The God whom no one sees.

He's everything my parents seem;

He's fairer than my fondest dream, And greater than all these.

- Anonymous

GUILTY

ONE of the most common faults of the human race is the fault of self-deception. We cannot seem to see ourselves as we really are. It is easy to see the fault in the other man, but it is extremely difficult to discover and acknowledge our own. That our neighbor has a vile temper we are quick to admit. We are reluctant to confess our own. In him it is "temper." In us it is "righteous indignation." A business associate of ours we consider dishonest, but when our own dealings are a little "shady," that is simply a "smart move" or a "clever policy." It is easy to hear the preacher's words and think how they apply to Brother So-and-So and fail to consider that they apply even more to us.

The Prophet Nathan came to King David and told him that there was a certain man in his kingdom who had many sheep and who wanted to prepare a banquet, but instead of slaughtering one of his own flock he stole the one pet lamb which his neighbor owned and killed that and served it. David, full of indignation and wrath at so cruel and so wicked a man, cried out, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and because he had no pity" (2 Samuel 12:5-6).

The prophet pointed a stern finger at the king and cried, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7), and the prophet proceeded to uncover the meaning of the parable of the man who killed his neighbor's

sheep. David, the king, had taken advantage of his royal power to rob another man of his wife and to send him to the front line of battle to be slain. David was indignant over a sheep stolen by another, but had been completely unconcerned about his own great sin. Having been so dramatically reminded of his guilt, he repented and prayed for forgiveness.

Which of us does not need to pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psalms 139:23).

Sin has a thousand treacherous arts To practice on the mind;

With flattering looks she tempts our hearts, But leaves a sting behind.

With names of virtue she deceives The aged and the young;

And while the heedless wretch believes, She makes his fetters strong.

She pleads for all the joys she brings, And gives a fair pretence;

But cheats the soul of heavenly things, And chains it down to sense.

- Isaac Watts

NO REASON FOR FEAR

THE Bible tells of many people who were afraid when there was no reason for fear. We are told that when Peter and James and John beheld the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus, "they were sore afraid" (Mark 9:6). The glory of His face and the appearance of Moses and Elias by His side frightened them so much that they did not know what to say, and the thrill of a great experience brought terror to their hearts.

The disciples were caught in a storm at sea and they were so afraid that they woke Jesus, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" (Mark 4:38). How could they fear that the boat in which the God of the sea was riding would be swallowed by the sea!

A woman who had been ill for years and had been unable to find a physician to cure her, touched the hem of Christ's garment as He passed down crowded streets one day and when He turned and asked, "Who touched me?" (Mark 5:31), she fell down "fearing and trembling" before Him. Surely, this woman whose faith in God's Son was so great that she was healed by the touch of His garment had no reason to fear Him who came into the world to give men life.

The women came to the tomb of Christ. They found the stone rolled away, the Lord risen, and an angel on guard, and "they were affrighted" (Mark 16:5). Here was no cause for fear. The angel was there to give them the glorious message that Christ was risen.

Christian people today all too often are fearful when there is nothing of which to be afraid. The future should hold no terror for God's child. The power of God should not frighten those who know His love. The storms of this world should not terrify those of whose lives Christ is the pilot. Men who are out of Christ have much to fear. They are lost here and hereafter, but God's child in daily fellowship with the Saviour should hear Him say, "It is I, be not afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

Give to the winds thy fears;

Hope and be undismayed;
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears, God shall lift up thy head.
Through waves and clouds and storms He gently clears thy way;
Wait thou His time; so shall this night Soon end in joyous day.
Leave to His sovereign sway To choose and to command;
So shalt thou, wondering, own His way, How wise, how strong His hand!
Far, far above thy thought His counsel shall appear,
When fully He the work hath wrought That caused thy needless fear.

- Paul Gerhardt

FOLLOW THE LEADER

IT SOMETIMES seems to me that the worst sin of our day is the sin of conformity. We fall in line too readily. What other people do, we do. All too often those who claim to be Christians imitate in their lives and habits those who do not claim to be Christians.

Many a man violates his conscience rather than be thought peculiar by refusing to do something he knows is wrong. There is many a young woman who accepts a cocktail because friends around her drink them, and because in the set in which she moves it has become an accepted custom.

We need nonconformists. "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" (Romans 12:2) is a good motto for Christian people in our day.

They are not supposed to follow with blind devotion the popular practice, but be directed by God's will. That which is intrinsically wrong does not become right because it becomes commonplace. Sin is sin whether it is popular or not. The great souls who have blessed the world have not been those who went with the crowd. They have been those who went against the crowd. Many of them were willing to die to be different. They gave their lives for holding to an ideal or a truth counter to the practices and beliefs of their day. Today many people would rather die than be different.

When God gave Moses instructions for His chosen people, He included this admonition: "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exodus 23:2). The tendency of the multitude is away from God and along the pathway of selfish gratification. He who follows the multitude is apt to find himself more often than not doing evil.

Come, Saviour, Jesus from above!

Assist me with Thy heavenly grace,

Empty my heart of earthly love, And for Thyself prepare the place.

O let Thy sacred presence fill, And set my longing spirit free!

Which pants to have no other will, But day and night to feast on Thee.

While in this region here below, No other good will I pursue:
I'll bid this world of noise and show, With all its glittering snares, adieu!
That path with humble speed I'll seek,
In which my Saviour's footsteps shine; Nor will I hear, nor will I speak,
Of any other love but Thine.
Henceforth may no profane delight Divide this consecrated soul;
Possess it, Thou who hast the right, As Lord and Master of the whole.

- Antoinette Bourignon

THE MINORITY WITH GOD

MANY phrases glibly quoted as popular sayings are far from true. Such a phrase is: "The majority is always right." As a matter of fact, it is to be questioned whether the majority is not more often wrong than right. There certainly can be no doubt that the majority is often wrong. In the days of Copernicus the majority believed that the earth was the center of the universe. In the time of Columbus the majority believed that the world was flat.

Truth is often nurtured and protected by the minority against the attacks and assaults of the majority. Majorities have sent martyrs to the stake. Majorities have crushed liberty and exalted false political theories. The great men and women of the world—those who have been pioneers of progress and enlightenment—have belonged to minorities. All too often the minority has called attention to a truth by suffering for it at the hands of the majority.

Jesus Christ said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). How true His Word is, has been proved by the conduct of men down the centuries. It is being proved today. The majority are greedy for gain, seeking their own pleasure, choosing their own way. The enjoyment of each passing moment and the accumulation of possessions are their chief purposes in life. How few in comparison choose the way of Christ, who said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). How few choose the things which belong to eternity and not to time!

No, the majority is not always right. The majority usually follows unthinkingly the line of least resistance and greatest immediate personal gratification. The majority is not concerned with truth. The majority seeks what is popular.

Christ's minority walks an unpopular way. They go like lambs among wolves. They are not concerned with being up-to-date and popular. They are, as far as this world is concerned, a minority, but it is better to be in the minority with God than in the majority without Him. My Redeemer and my Lord,

I beseech Thee, I entreat Thee,

Guide me in each act and word,
That hereafter I may meet Thee,
Watching, waiting, hoping, yearning,
With my lamp well trimmed and burning,
Interceding with these bleeding wounds Upon Thy hands and side,
For all who have lived and erred, Thou hast suffered, Thou hast died,
Scourged and mocked and crucified,
And in the grave hast Thou been buried.
If my feeble prayer can reach Thee,
Oh, my Saviour, I beseech Thee,
Even as Thou hast died for me,
More sincerely
Let me follow where Thou ledest,
Let me, bleeding as Thou bleedest,
Die if dying I may give
Life to one who asks to live, And more nearly,
Dying thus, resemble Thee.

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow THE POINT OF VIEW

THE angle from which we look at an object is largely responsible for the impression which the object makes upon us. The place where we stand governs our outlook. The "point of view" affects the vision.

God had led the children of Israel out of Egypt. They were camped on the shore of the Red Sea, closed in by the topography of the land between the water and the army of Pharaoh. The pillar of cloud and fire which had led them by day and by night now settled down between them and the army of Pharaoh like a curtain.

To the Egyptians it was "a cloud and darkness." To the Israelites "it gave light by night" (Exodus 14:20). Talk about a cloud with a silver lining! Here is one black and gloomy on one side and a flame of brilliance on the other. The Egyptian army in all the pride of its power had set itself against God's people, and whoever sets himself against them sets himself against God. From their point of view the cloud was darkness. The children of Israel were God's people on God's side, led to this spot by God. No wonder the cloud was all brilliance to them! They were in the right place.

The point of view is important. From the standpoint of time, all our little ambitions, our quest for pleasure and physical satisfaction, seem big and important. From the standpoint of eternity, they

are petty and insignificant. Our lives are “as grass.”

Men solve one problem after a fashion, and are immediately faced with another more difficult problem. From the purely human standpoint the future at best looks gloomy and foreboding. Seen from the viewpoint of God, the future is bright and glorious. This world is to become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. When God's Son returns to reign, He will solve all problems, settle all strikes.

The Christian should be an optimist. He is in the position always to look on the bright side.

Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest,

Far did I rove, and found no certain home;

At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,

Who opes His arms, and bids the weary come:

With Him I found a home, a rest divine,

And since then I am His, and He is mine. The good I have is from His stores supplied,

The ill is only what He deems the best;

He for my Friend, I'm rich with nought beside,

And poor without Him, though of all possessed:

Changes may come-I take, or I resign,

Content, while I am His, while He is mine.

- John Quarks and Henry F. Lyle

IT PAYS TO DO RIGHT

AMAZIAH, the king of Judah, was a “practical” man. He hired a hundred thousand mercenary soldiers from Israel, paying them one hundred talents of silver. These men were to join with his own armies in the wars of conquest which he planned, but God was opposed to “the deal.” He wanted Judah to be dependent upon Him and not upon hired soldiers. The Lord sent a prophet to Amaziah, who said, “Let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the Lord is not with Israel” (2 Chronicles 25:7).

Amaziah heard the prophet speak the words of the Lord and then replied, “But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel?” (2 Chronicles 25:9). God had spoken. The king's only concern should have been to do that which God commanded, but he was worried about his hundred talents.

There are many people like that today. They know what God wants them to do. They are perfectly aware of what is the right thing to do, but instead of doing it, they weigh the consequences and ask themselves how much it is going to cost them.

- Business men say, "I know that this is the right thing to do, but I cannot afford to do it. It will hurt my business."

- Politicians say, "This is the right side of this issue. I should support it, but I cannot afford to. I have to stand in with my constituency. It will cost me votes."

- There are even some preachers who are unwilling to speak the truth because it may irritate someone who is a prominent member of the church or who helps with his financial support.

Amaziah was not the first man to raise the question about the cost of doing God's will, and he certainly was not the last. The prophet had an answer from God to Amaziah's question, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." It is an answer which the man who is tempted to compromise for fear of the cost might take to himself. It "pays" to do right, but men should do right because it is right, even if it does not "pay."

Almighty and Eternal God, the Disposer of all the affairs of the world, there is not one circumstance so great as not to be subject to Thy power, nor so small but it comes within Thy care; Thy goodness and wisdom show themselves through all Thy works, and Thy loving-kindness and mercy appear in the several dispensations of Thy providence. May we readily submit ourselves to Thy pleasure and sincerely resign our wills to Thine, with all patience, meekness and humility; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

- Queen Anne of England

MOURN NOT

GOD does not promise the Christian that he will not have sorrow. The world is full of grief and God's child has no right to expect to be free from it. The Christian as well as the sinner loses his loved ones. He feels the anguish of parting and knows the sadness of death. Indeed, the Christian should not only expect sorrow, he should expect persecution also, for if we would live godly in this present world, we shall suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

But the Christian's sorrow is not like the sorrow of the sinner. "Ye sorrow not," cried Paul, "even as others which have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13). The sinner sees the tomb sealed and turns away with no hope of being united with the loved one laid to rest. To him death is darkness with no promise of daybreak, night with no hope of dawn. The Christian beside the tomb of one whom he loves knows the sorrow of separation but it is "for a little while." The trusting child of God fallen asleep in Christ has gone to be with his Lord. Someday his Lord will return.

The spirit of the sleeping Christian will be reunited with his body and he will come forth from the dust to be caught up with the living saints in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52). Loved ones separated by death will be reunited for eternity.

The resurrection of the Christian is assured. Christ who has Himself conquered death, the Risen One who is the firstfruits of them that sleep, declares, "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

The Christian can expect sometime to stand under a cloud of sorrow, but it is a cloud draped with a rainbow of divine promise of resurrection. We sorrow not as those who have no hope. Whittier

put into poetry his pity for those who do not have the Christian's blessed hope:

Alas! for him who never sees

The stars shine through the cypress-trees!

Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,

Nor looks to see the breaking day

Across the mournful marbles play!

Who hath not learned, in hours of faith,

The truth to flesh and sense unknown,

That Life is ever lord of Death,

And Love can never lose its own!

O my God! If Thou art pleased to render me a spectacle to men and angels, Thy holy will be done! All I ask is that Thou wilt be with and save those who love Thee, so that neither life nor death, neither principalities nor powers may ever separate them from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ. As for me, what matters it what men think of me, or what they make me suffer, since they cannot separate me from that Saviour whose Name is engraven in the very bottom of my heart? If I can only be accepted of Him, I am willing that all men should despise and hate me. Their strokes will polish what may be defective in me, so that I may be presented in peace to Him, for whom I die daily. Without His favor I am wretched. O Saviour! I present myself before Thee an offering, a sacrifice. Purify me in Thy blood, that I may be accepted of Thee. Amen.

- Jeanne Marie Guy on, who was imprisoned in the Bastille because of her religious beliefs.

WHEN GOD GOES TO JAIL

JOSEPH was in prison. He was there not because he had done wrong but because he had done right. Because he had repulsed the advances of the wife of Potiphar, his master, she had lied about him and had falsely accused him; and he had, therefore, been thrown into prison.

Genesis 39:1-23, which tells the story, says, "And he was there in the prison. But the Lord was with Joseph." It is better to be in jail and have God with you than it is to be out of jail and without God. It is better to have a body in prison and the soul free than it is to have a body free and the soul in the prison of sin. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord" (Psalms 37:23), and if, as a good man, your steps are ordered of God to jail, God will share your prison cell.

The presence of God can transform a dungeon into a colony of heaven, but a palace without His presence and without His love to bless it may be a bit of hell itself. This is not the day-at least in America-when it is common for men to be put into prison for refusing to do evil. There are, however, other surroundings in life just as unpleasant as a cell, and there are circumstances in life just as confining as the bolts and bars of a prison. The God whose presence made Joseph's time of imprisonment a time of blessing for him and a time of ministry to others, will, if our lives are yielded to Him, bless us and make us a source of blessing wherever we may be.

From his prison Joseph went to a position of power in Egypt second only to the king's. The God who was with him in prison went with him to the palace. In the day of his prominence and wealth Joseph remained faithful to God as he had been while in jail. I wonder if that was not the real test of the quality of his faith and spiritual experience. Many a man who enjoys the blessings of fellowship with the Most High in the time of disappointment and sorrow and poverty forgets Him amid wealth and prosperity and prominence.

How tedious and tasteless the hours When Jesus no longer I see;

Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers Have all lost their sweetness to me;

The midsummer sun shines but dim, The fields strive in vain to look gay;

But when I am happy in Him, December's as pleasant as May.

His Name yields the richest perfume, And sweeter than music His voice;

His presence disperses my gloom, And makes all within me rejoice;

I should, were He always thus nigh, Have nothing to wish or to fear;

No mortal so happy as I, My summer would last all the year.

Content with beholding His face,

My all to His pleasure resigned, No changes of season or place Would make any change in my mind:

While blest with a sense of His love, A palace a toy would appear;

And prisons would palaces prove, If Jesus would dwell with me there.

- John Newton

HABITS

WHAT you are is revealed not so much by what you do on special occasions as by what you do habitually. Habits develop through constant repetition of an act. Behind an act is a thought. Character is built act upon act and thought upon thought as a building rises stone upon stone.

Habits reveal character because they indicate the process of the thinking. That which has become such a part of you that you do it unconsciously and habitually reveals what you are. Psychology has discovered this truth, but it was truth before modern "wise men" stumbled upon it. It is the truth set forth over and over in the Word of God:

- "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7);

- "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23);

- "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things" (Matthew 12:35).

Abraham lived habitually in such close communion with God that it became the most natural thing in the world for Abraham to set up an altar for sacrifice wherever he pitched his tent. David forgave

his enemies so often that it became a natural part of his character to be forgiving. Moses was habitually so patient that we scarcely notice all the manifestations of patience in the life of this man whom the Bible describes as “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3).

We notice his act of anger in smiting the rock (Numbers 20:11) for the very reason that it is so unlike him. The obedience to God’s command which is natural for the old Prophet Samuel had its roots in the obedience of the young lad Samuel.

Something of the nature of our Lord Himself may be seen in the casual phrase, “as his custom was, he went into the synagogue” (Luke 4:16).

Habits are important whether they be habits of action or the habits of thought which precede the action, but the grace and power of God are sufficient to break the strong chain of evil habit and of wicked thinking. He is able to create a clean heart and renew a right spirit within. He can destroy the power of sinful habits. Indeed, He is able to regenerate completely, to make over the entire life.

Searcher of Hearts!-from mine erase All thoughts that should not be,

And in its deep recesses trace My gratitude to Thee!

Hearer of Prayer!-oh, guide aright Each word and deed of mine;

Life’s battle teach me how to fight, And be the victory Thine.

Giver of All! - for every good In the Redeemer came-

For raiment, shelter and for food, I thank Thee in His Name.

Father and Son and Holy Ghost!

Thou glorious Three in One!

Thou knowest best what I need most,

And let Thy will be done.

- George Pope Morris

GOD’S CURE FOR FAINTING SPELLS

LUKE tells us that the Lord spoke one of His parables to convey to His hearers the truth “that men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1).

We think of prayer as a privilege, which certainly it is. One of the great miracles of God’s grace is the fact that man may enjoy in prayer communion with God, that in prayer man may make his desires known to God, that he may in prayer discover God’s will and ask God’s intervention in his affairs. But prayer is more than a privilege. It is an obligation. Each individual in the universe has a responsibility to do his best. Every father has a responsibility to be the best possible father to his child. Every child has a responsibility to his parents which it is his duty to meet to the best of his ability. Every businessman has an obligation of honor and integrity and industry, and it is the plain teaching of the Word of God that it is a sin for a man to do less than his best.

No one can do his best until he taps the resources of Deity and seeks divine guidance. Prayer is, therefore, an obligation. Christians are commanded to “pray without ceasing,” that is, to maintain a constant attitude of prayer, to keep in constant communion and fellowship with the Father. Paul more than once urged the saints to pray for him; and to Timothy, his son in the Gospel, he declared, “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8).

Prayer is instinctive. Men who have professed to doubt the existence of Deity in the midst of great battle or in a storm at sea have cried out to God when death seemed imminent. How much better to be in constant communion and fellowship with Him, regenerated children of God, making our desires and requests known unto Him, who is our Father, assured that “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him” (Psalms 103:13).

Lord, what a change within us one short hour

Spent in Thy presence will avail to make!

What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!

What parched ground refresh as with a shower!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;

We rise, and all, the distant and the near,

Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;

We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!

Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong, Or other-that we are not always strong-

That we are sometimes overborne with care-

That we should ever weak or heartless be, Anxious or troubled-when with us is prayer, And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?

- Richard C. Trench

THE STATE OF CONTENTMENT

THE “State of Contentment” is thinly populated. Few-people know when they are well off. Most of us are like the children of Israel during their years in the wilderness.

They had been freed from slavery in Egypt. Their backs were scarred by the lashes which the taskmasters had laid upon them there. Their hands were still calloused with the toil of their slavery. Here in the wilderness they were free men out of whom God was building a nation.

- His tabernacle had been established in their midst.

- His presence had been shown by the pillar of fire by night and cloud by day.

- His law had been given them by His hand.

- Their clothes and their shoes were being miraculously preserved from wear.

- They were being fed by manna from heaven.

It was no longer necessary for them to labor for the Egyptian taskmaster and feed upon the meal of slaves wearily prepared after the hard labor of the day. They had simply to pick up the manna God generously poured out each day.

But they grew tired of manna and began to long for the fleshpots of Egypt. They complained about God's menu and for the sake of the pleasure of their palates wished themselves back under the bondage of Pharaoh.

They had forgotten the sting of the lash and the cruelty of the Egyptians. All they remembered was the odor of cooking meat.

It would seem that their hearts would have been so full of thanksgiving and praise that there would have been no room for complaint. But these Israelites are not the only ones who have lacked the virtue of contentment. Some even of the godly have need to pray for a contented heart, without which no man ever truly possesses all that God intends him to have of blessing.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6).

A little bird I am, Shut in from fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing To Him who placed me there;
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleases Thee!
Naught have I else to do;
I sing the whole day long;
And He whom I most love to please Doth listen to my song;
He caught and bound my wandering wing,
And still He bends to hear me sing.
Thou hast an ear to hear. A heart to love and bless;
And though my notes were e'er so rude, Thou wouldst not hear the less;
Because Thou knowest as they fall,
That love, sweet love, inspires them all.
My cage confines me round, Abroad I cannot fly;
But though my wing is closely bound, My heart's at liberty;
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul.
Oh, it is good to soar, These bolts and bars above,

To Him whose purpose I adore, Whose providence I love;

And in Thy mighty will to find

The joy, the freedom of the mind.

- Madame Guyon (written in the Bastille)

“THE THING WE FORGET WITH”

SOMEONE asked a little boy what his memory was. He replied, “My memory is the thing I forget with.”

His definition accurately describes the memories of some of us with regard to the blessings and benefits of almighty God. Benisons are poured out upon us. We quickly forget.

As one reads the history of Israel in the Old Testament he finds abundant evidence of man's tendency to forget God's goodness. God brought Israel out of Egypt; He overthrew the power of Pharaoh, the mighty monarch, the ruler of a great nation; he sent plagues upon the land in order to set the people free. Pharaoh and his army were destroyed in the Red Sea. Surely, these happenings were sufficient evidence that the God who brought them out of Egypt was a God who was abundantly able to protect His chosen people and give them the land which He had appointed for them, but when they sent spies into the land, they came back with stories of walled cities, “fenced up to heaven,” of giants in the land - powerful, mighty men.

All the spies except Caleb and Joshua advised Israel not to attempt to capture the land. They forgot the power of God, so impressed were they with the physique of the giants. The people accepted their advice and the fear which the spies felt became the fear of the whole nation. For forty years Israel wandered in the wilder-ness until the entire generation died because they forgot the mercy and power of God manifested in their delivery from Egypt.

No wonder, then, that in the book of Deuteronomy the Lord urged Israel to “well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:18). The very laws which God instituted, the very ceremonies which He established for the government of His people and for their worship of Him, were to remind them of His power and His grace and His love. God said to them, “When thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand” (Deuteronomy 6:20-21).

God is faithful and never forgets His own. How His heart must be grieved at our forgetting Him!

Over and over again He has proved that His grace is sufficient to meet all our needs, yet new trials bring new fears unassuaged by the memory of past blessing. How much happier we would be, how strong to meet the responsibilities of each day, if we would take as our motto and put into practice those words in the Song of Solomon 1:4, “We will remember thy love.”

Though I forget Him and wander away,

Yet doth He love me wherever I stray,

Back to His dear loving arms would I flee,

When I remember that Jesus loves me.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

01.07. Rejoice In The Lord Always

“Rejoice In The Lord Always”

(Php 4:4) CHAPTER SEVEN

FULLNESS OF JOY

TO THE unsaved man or woman the Christian way of life seems gloomy and unhappy. In their opinion, when one becomes a Christian he gives up things which are pleasant and attractive and undertakes a life of long-faced monotony and pious misery.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Christian life is a way of happiness. Faith in Christ implants joy in the human heart. The Saviour came that men might have abundant life, and a life without joy is certainly not abundant; it is barren and empty. The Apostle Peter speaks of the Lord as the One in whom “believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

The heart of a child of God has every reason to rejoice. The Christian rejoices because of what Christ has given him and because of what He has taken away. He has been given salvation. He has passed from death into life. He has been given the assurance of God’s presence now and hereafter. From him has been removed a sense of guilt and a weight of sin. He has been freed from the domination of old habits and old impulses. He has been led out of darkness into light. Surely, this is enough to cause springs of joy to well up in the heart.

A day-by-day experience of God’s mercy develops the Christian’s joy. As he trusts his Lord for comfort in the time of sorrow and finds the comfort supplied, as he leans upon Him for strength in a moment of weakness and finds himself upheld, as he turns to Him in the hour of need and finds the need met, he cannot help rejoicing.

This joy is increased as the Lord speaks to him through His Word, the Bible. Christ Himself said to His disciples, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11), and from the Word of God a joy ever new and fresh comes to the Christian as he turns the holy pages. The command to rejoice seems almost superfluous as he is told to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Php 4:4). When he walks with His Father, the Christian is always filled with joy.

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou fount of life, Thou light of men,
From all the bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.
Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
Thou savest those that on Thee call;

To them that seek Thee Thou art good,
To them that find Thee, all in all.
Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast;
Glad, when Thy gracious smile we see,
Blest, when our faith can hold Thee fast.
O Jesus, ever with us stay;
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light!

- Bernard of Clairvaux

HIS OWN GOD

DAVID was a man after God's own heart, but he was not free from sorrow and suffering. His life was often in danger and he knew what it meant to be pursued by an enemy and lose temporal possessions. One of the occasions when, from the human standpoint, he should have been in the lowest emotional state is recorded in the thirtieth chapter of I Samuel. David had returned with his soldiers to his city of Ziklag to find it in ruins. The Amalekites had carried away their wives and their children and their possessions. His discouraged followers broke into open rebellion. There is no record that David was discouraged in this hour. On the contrary, we are told, "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30:6). God was real and personal to David. God was his God. Only the man who has established a personal relationship with God is prepared to meet the loss of loved ones and possessions as David met it. Only the man who has made God his own can encourage himself in God in such an hour.

The God whom David knew as his God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was the God of Israel, but most important of all to David, He was his God. It is well to recognize the existence of God in His universe, but we need to know Him personally. We need to make Him our God. He wants us each to come into personal relationship with Him. "But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29). The Lord Jesus Christ, who is God come in the flesh and the Way by which men may come to God, said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

The Amalekites took all David's earthly possessions, but they could not take God away from him. In the midst of his loss he kept that which was most important—a personal grip on God. In the midst of causes for discouragement he had kept his source of encouragement—his God.

I love, my God, but with no love of mine, For I have none to give;

I love Thee, Lord, but all that love is Thine, For by Thy life I live.

I am as nothing, and rejoice to be
Emptied and lost and swallowed up in Thee.
Thou, Lord, alone, art all Thy children need And there is none beside;
From Thee the streams of blessedness proceed; In Thee the blest abide,
Fountain of life and all-abounding grace,
Our source, our center and our dwelling-place!

- Madame Guyon

FAITH OR CONFIDENCE

SOME people confuse faith with confidence. In one sense, the two are not identical in their source, nor are they founded on a common spiritual basis.

Confidence may be born of a nature that is naturally optimistic and hopes for the best. A man may be confident that “things will turn out all right,” and think he has faith when he has only confidence.

Confidence may spring from a knowledge of the characteristics and potentialities which another possesses. A mother may have confidence in the qualities of her son’s character and take it for granted that because of them he will make a success of his life, and think she has faith.

Confidence may spring from reliance upon oneself. A man may evaluate his own gifts and talents and abilities and have confidence that he will be able to accomplish a certain task and think this is faith.

Faith is more than this. Faith is fixed in God. Faith is not merely an unreasoning hope, nor is it wishful thinking that God will do the thing we want Him to do. It is the assurance that He will keep His word and bring to pass that which He has promised to perform. Faith is founded in God who can because He is omnipotent, and who will because He promised. The surrendered Christian knows that God will lead him because he believes the Word of God which promises, “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (Psalms 37:5).

A godly mother has faith that her child will live right because she has done her best to bring him up in the fear of the Lord and because God has assured her in His Word, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Faith is superior to confidence as divine omnipotence is superior to mortal weakness. Confidence may enable a man to climb a mountain whose lofty peak challenges his efforts. Faith removes the mountain. Confidence helps a mariner to sail his boat safely through a stormy sea, but only faith can enable a man to walk on the waves. Faith has this foundation- the Word of God - and “the foundation [Word] of God standeth sure.”

Faith is a living power from heaven
That grasps the promise God hath given,
A trust that cannot be o’erthrown,

Fixed heartily on Christ alone.
Faith finds in Christ whate'er we need
To save or strengthen us indeed;
Receive the grace He sends us down,
And makes us share His cross and crown.
Faith in the conscience worketh peace
And bids the mourner's weeping cease;
By faith the children's place we claim,
And give all honor to one Name.
Faith feels the Spirit's kindling breath
In love and hope that conquer death;
Faith worketh hourly joy in God,
And trusts and blesses e'en the rod.
We thank Thee, then, O God of heaven,
That Thou to us this faith hast given
In Jesus Christ Thy Son, who is
Our only fount and source of bliss.

- Petrus Herbert BE NOT AFRAID

ON TWO OCCASIONS (Mark 4:35-39; Matthew 14:22-27) the lord's disciples were caught in a storm on the Sea of Galilee. The first time Jesus was asleep in the stern of the boat. In their fear they waked Him, asking, "Carest thou not that we perish?" He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Be still." With the simple language of divine authority He silenced the tempest and calmed the sea. The waves, like little dogs that obey the command of their master, lay down and went to sleep.

On the other occasion the disciples were in the boat without Him, and in the midst of the tempest He came to them walking on the sea. This time He did not speak to the wind or the sea, but to them. "It is I; be not afraid." He had demonstrated His power over the storm once. Now His very presence should bring them confidence.

Christ is still able to quiet the tempest and subdue storms. He can still work the miracle of bringing peace and quiet out of turmoil and discord, but it is not always His will to do so. When He permits the storm to rage, His very presence in the lives of those who know and love Him brings peace and confidence in the midst of the storm.

It is a wonderful thing to know the Saviour, who is able to settle strife and subdue discord and bring peace out of tumult. It is even more wonderful to have a Lord who can give inward peace and confidence to His followers in the midst of the storm it is not His divine will to subdue.

Into every life comes a time of tempest when the winds blow and the waves beat and the seas threaten to engulf. In such a time the very presence of the Saviour is able to impart within our souls a sense of security and calm in amazing contrast to the tempest about us. In the midst of the storm which He permits to rage, He comes to His own, walking on the very waves which would become still if He should so command. He does not address the raging elements. He speaks instead to the frightened and storm-tossed ones. Above the sound of the storm and the surge of the seas comes the melody of His voice, "It is I; be not afraid," and all is quiet and peaceful within their breasts.

So amid the storms of our lives He speaks to His own, "My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). No coward soul is mine,

No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:

I see heaven's glories shine,

And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,

Almighty, ever-present Deity!

Life - that in me hast rest,

As I-undying Life-have power in Thee!

- Emily Bronte

AS A STRING AROUND GOD'S FINGER

WHEN the flood was over, the waters had receded, and the Ark had settled on the dry ground, God made a covenant with Noah and his sons that never would "all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood."

The word covenant is one of the wonderful words of the Bible and it means literally "a coming together." It signifies a voluntary promise, a pledge made by God to His creatures. The very word speaks of divine mercy and grace and condescension.

God not only made a promise to Noah, but He also sets the sign of His covenant in the heavens for men of every generation to behold. Indeed, this covenant has been called the Rainbow Covenant, for God promised Noah that when the storm clouds gather His bow shall be set in the clouds and God said, "I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature" (Genesis 9:16). God pins the ribbon of the rainbow upon the breast of the storm cloud to remind Him of His covenant to man. Whenever God looks upon the rainbow it reminds Him of the promise that He made, though man may see the rainbow only as an arch of color across the sky, a thing of beauty, forgetting that it is a sign of God's faithfulness.

Men forget God so easily. They accept the blessings which He gives with never a thought of the Giver. They live for themselves with no regard for the Author of life. Or, in times of trouble and distress and special conviction, they make promises to the Lord which they forget with the passing of the days. Men are faithless and forgetful, but God remembers and keeps His covenant. God's promises are fixed and sure. However faithless we may prove, He is still the Faithful One.

The promises of God's judgment are as sure as the covenant of His mercy. Just as surely as He will save and redeem -as He has promised to-those who trust Him, so surely will He keep His word by punishing those who mock sin and reject the atoning blood of His Son. When all Thy mercies, O my God, My rising soul surveys,

Transported with the view, I'm lost In wonder, love and praise.

Unnumbered comforts to my soul Thy tender care bestowed,
Before my infant heart conceived From whom those comforts flowed.

When worn with sickness, oft hast Thou

With health renewed my face, And, when in sins and sorrows sunk,
Revived my soul with grace.

Ten thousand, thousand precious gifts My daily thanks employ,
Nor is the least a cheerful heart That tastes those gifts with joy.

- Joseph Addison

“TIGHTWADS”

THERE are many people to whom the Bible refers whose names do not appear in the record. Often the casual reader fails to notice these minor actors in the great dramas of the Bible. Such are those individuals mentioned in connection with the procuring of the donkey upon which Christ rode into Jerusalem a few days before His crucifixion.

He sent the disciples into the village with the instructions that they would find “an ass tied, and a colt with her” (Matthew 21:2). They were to be loosed and brought to Him. Should any inquire what they were doing, the disciples were to answer, “The Lord hath need of them” (Matthew 21:3).

The disciples went and found the animals at a corner where two roads met. As they took them, some who stood by asked, “What do ye, loosing the colt?” (Mark 11:5), and when the disciples replied as the Lord had instructed, they let them go.

Who these bystanders may have been we do not know. Possibly the owner of the animals was one of them or they may have been members of his family or his servants or friends. They must have been acquainted with the disciples whom they had surely seen before with Christ. Evidently they at least knew who the disciples were. Certainly they were good men, for all they needed was to be told that the Lord needed the animals and they let them go willingly.

They are different from some folk I know, who refuse God the use of the very things which He has given to them. There are those who hold on to their money and refuse to support the work of the

Lord. They deny God their time and their talents though every breath of their lives He supplies, and the power to make money, He endowed them with, and their talents He entrusted to them.

We do not know the name of the owner of the beast upon which Christ rode into Jerusalem, but we all know the names of some who under the same circumstances would have said, "But the animals belong to me. They are too valuable to give the Lord."

What was his name? I do not know his name;
I only know he heard God's voice and came,
Brought all he had across the sea
To live and work for God and me;
Felled the ungracious oak;
Dragged from the soil
With horrid toil
The thrice-gnarled roots and stubborn rock;
With plenty piled the haggard mountain side;
And at the end, without memorial, died.
No blaring trumpets sounded out his fame,
He lived-he died-I do not know his name.
And I? Is there some desert or some pathless sea
Where Thou, Good God of angels, wilt send me?
Some oak for me to rend; some sod,
Some rock for me to break;
Some handful of His corn to take
And scatter far afield,
Till it, in turn, shall yield
Its hundredfold Of grains of gold
To feed the waiting children of my God?
Show me the desert, Father, or the sea.
Is it Thine enterprise? Great God, send me.
And though this body lie where ocean rolls,
Count me among all faithful souls.

- Edward Everett Hale

“MY JOY . . . IN YOU”

ON THE night of the Last Supper, Jesus, as He spoke to His disciples about His relationship with the Father and their relationship with Him and as He discussed with them their attitude toward the world, said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

When the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ is in a man’s heart his joy is always full, and there is no fullness of joy anywhere except in Christ. God has made the human heart so only He Himself can fill it. All the pleasures of the world, all the riches of earth, though they may bring a temporary thrill, leave unsatisfied the longing of the heart.

“My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God,” says the psalmist. The soul of man is immortal, and only God can satisfy the hunger of the soul and bring eternal joy. The immortal cannot be satisfied with the temporal, and the eternal with that which is transient. Some of the most unhappy people I have known have been people of wealth and fame-people successful from the viewpoint of the world. Some of the happiest people I know are those who have little of the material things of life, no fame and no prominence, but who possess the unsearchable riches of Christ. Of course, the Christian has his sorrows. He is grieved by the deaths of his loved ones, but he sorrows not “as those who have no hope,” and in the midnight of his sorrow sings the nightingale of hope bringing joy to his heart with the assurance that he shall see his dear ones again.

When the man without Christ loses his wealth and his friends and his family, he has lost everything. Let the Christian see his family taken from him, his temporal possessions swept away and his friends removed-he still has the abiding presence of Christ in whom his hope is fixed and who is the Author and Source of his joy.

The man whose affections are set on Christ has every reason to rejoice because he knows that all things work together for his good (Romans 8:28). The man who lives in daily fellowship with the Lord is in contact with the Source of joy eternal.

“In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalms 16:11).

Think- Of stepping on shore, and finding it heaven! Of taking hold of a hand, and finding it God’s hand. Of breathing a new air, and finding it celestial air. Of feeling invigorated, and finding it immortality. Of passing from storm and tempest to an unbroken calm. Of waking up, and finding it Home.

-Anonymous

LIGHT FOR OUR DARKNESS

NONE of the statements which the Lord Jesus made of Himself is more emphatic than this, “I am the light of the world.” No assurance which He gives to man is more positive than this, “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness.”

He is Light and the Author of light. By Him were all things made. His hands lighted starry tapers, and at His word were born the blazing suns of the universe. In Him there is no darkness at all—no darkness of ignorance, for He knows the end from the beginning; no darkness of death, for He is the Light of Life; no darkness of sin, for He is the Sun of Righteousness; no darkness of error, for He is Truth Incarnate. Heaven itself finds in Him the source of its light.

John on the isle of Patmos catching a glimpse of the beauty and effulgent glory of the New Jerusalem, wrote, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it” (Revelation 21:23-24).

The man who follows Christ never walks in darkness. He may walk in the midst of darkness, but his steps are lighted by the presence of the Saviour whom he follows, just as a man who walks on a dark night behind a guide with a lantern finds, in the midst of the darkness, light in the spot where he walks.

The man who follows Christ has the light of divine wisdom cast upon the problems which confront him, and in this light he is able to solve them. He may not be able to see the future or view the long way stretching ahead, but there is light where he needs it, when he needs it, in the very spot where he finds himself.

In the night of great sorrow the man who follows Christ finds the light of hope to cheer his way. Christ proves Himself the true light to all who follow Him.

Christ, whose glory fills the skies, Christ the true, the only light,

Sun of Righteousness, arise,

Triumph o'er the shades of night;

Dayspring from on high, be near;

Daystar, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn Unaccompanied by Thee; Joyless is the day's return,

Till Thy mercy's beams I see,

Till thy inward light impart,

Glad my eyes and warm my heart.

Visit, then, this soul of mine, Pierce the gloom of sin and grief;

Fill me, Radiance divine, Scatter all my unbelief;

More and more Thyself display,

Shining to the perfect day.

- Charles Wesley

TIME MARCHES ON

THE armies of Israel were in the midst of a battle with the Ammonites. Victory seemed to be at hand, but there were not enough hours of daylight left in which to follow up the advantage they were gaining and destroy the Ammonite armies. Joshua, the leader chosen by God for Israel, confident in the strength of His Lord and assured that it was God's will for Israel to wipe out her enemies, commanded the sun to stand still. In obedience to his command the progress of the sun toward the west was stayed. The day was lengthened and Israel was victorious.

How many times we have wished for Joshua's power over the forces of nature! How often we have longed to lengthen the hours that have been full of joy and pleasure! Who has not wished for more time to complete his tasks and accomplish the purposes he has had to cram into hours all too short?

Who has not, at other times, wished that he could reverse the process and speed the fleeting hours? Time hangs heavily about a bed of pain. The minutes march with lagging steps through the dark valley of sorrow. For the lover the days limp like laggards along the lonely path of separation from the one he loves.

Who has not wished that he could reverse the journeyings of the sun and bring back again the days of childhood and hours long since lost in the sea of eternity? Who has not cried in his soul, "Backward, turn backward, O Time, in thy flight"?

We are not Joshuas. To us is not given to lengthen the day or to shorten it. We cannot recall lost hours, but we can fill each day.

We can pack into each hour and each moment faithful service and profitable accomplishment. We cannot lengthen the hours, but we must not waste the minutes. "Art is long and time is fleeting," and some time we must give an account to God for the investment we have made of the days and the hours and the moments entrusted to us.

"Why sit'st thou by that ruined hall, Thou aged carle so stern and gray?

Dost thou its former pride recall, Or ponder how it passed away?"

"Know'st thou not me?" the Deep Voice cried:

"So long enjoyed, so oft misused- Alternate, in thy fickle pride, Desired, neglected, and accused!

Before my breath, like blazing flax, Man and his marvels pass away!

And changing empires wane and wax, Are founded, flourish and decay.

Redeem mine hours-the space is brief-

While in my glass the sand-grains shiver, And measureless thy joy or grief, When Time and thou shalt part forever!"

- The Antiquary

OUR ARMAMENTS AND HIS ARM

WISE words these from the book of Proverbs, "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31). We have had abundant evidence of the folly of being

unprepared for the attack of the aggressor. The Great War brought upon the freedom-loving nations of the world defeat after defeat because they were not prepared. Trained soldiers were lacking. Equipment was lacking. Armaments were lacking.

It is a wise thing for a nation to be prepared for war when it comes, but armies and arms do not themselves assure victory. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong" (Ecclesiastes 9:11). The God of battles oftentimes fights on the side which is weaker in numbers and equipment. The walls of Jericho did not go down under the bombardment of heavy artillery but before the blasts of priestly trumpets and the shouts of faith. Israel was not freed from the menace of the Egyptian by a blitzkrieg of mechanized troops but by the waters of the Red Sea, which God poured in upon Pharaoh's army. Goliath was not destroyed by a veteran equipped with all the paraphernalia of war but by a shepherd lad with faith in his heart and a sling in his hand. Three hundred men under Gideon, the Lord's captain, were victorious over an army of 135,000.

It is wise to be prepared, but it is foolish to trust only in arms and fail to take into account the power of God in whose strong arm victory resides. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31). Our faith, our trust, our hope should be in the "Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." We should be as wise as David who said, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Psalms 20:7). God has yet to fail those whose faith and trust is fixed in Him. It is our responsibility to do everything in our power to defeat the enemy and achieve victory. It is our privilege to trust in Him who is of nations as of men: Rock, Fortress, Deliverer, Strength, Buckler, Horn of Salvation and High Tower (Psalms 18:2).

I greet Thee, my Redeemer sure, I trust in none but Thee,

Thou who hast borne such toil and shame And suffering for me: Our hearts from cares and cravings vain And foolish fears set free.

Thou art the King compassionate, Thou reignest everywhere;

Almighty Lord, reign Thou in us, Rule all we have and are:

Enlighten us and raise to heaven, Amid Thy glories there.

Thou art the life by which we live; Our stay and strength's in Thee;

Uphold us so in face of death, What time soe'er it be,

That we may meet it with strong heart, And may die peacefully.

Look Thou, our Daysman and High Priest, Upon our low estate;

Make us to see God's face in peace Through Thee, our Advocate;

With Thee, our Saviour, may our feet Enter at heaven's gate.

- John Calvin

PRAYER THAT GETS THROUGH

THE best prayer is not always the best-worded prayer. A man can build a rhetorical structure of phrase upon phrase ornamented with all the embellishments of language, address it to Deity,

intone it solemnly and call it a prayer, and it may never go higher than the ceiling.

Real prayer gushes from the heart. It is the spontaneous outflowing of deep desire in petition to God. A child who greatly desires something asks his father for it without thinking particularly of the language he uses. He says simply, "Daddy, I want that. Give it to me."

Waking frightened in the darkness, a child does not consider the tone of voice that he uses when he calls to his mother. Similarly, true prayer pours from the heart of our need and the depths of our desire to God.

An interesting verse in the Old Testament tells us that the men of Judah in the midst of a battle found themselves surrounded by their enemies and "they cried unto the Lord" (2 Chronicles 13:14).

There was no time to compose formal prayers. The soldiers of Judah needed help and needed it quickly, and they cried unto God. It may be doubted whether they were conscious of the words that they used. They may not have formed words at all, but the chapter tells us that God heard them and smote their enemies and delivered them into the hands of those busy, fighting Judeans, who cried out to Him in the midst of the battle.

The man in the heat of a battle praying for deliverance does not choose his words carefully. The man who is oppressed by a consciousness of his sin and need is not concerned with how he sounds when he cries, "God be merciful to me a sinner." From ev'ry stormy wind that blows,

From ev'ry swelling tide of woes,

There is a calm, a sure retreat;

'Tis found beneath the mercy-seat.

There is a place where Jesus sheds

The oil of gladness on our heads,

A place than all beside more sweet;

It is the blood-bo't mercy-seat.

There is a scene where spirits blend,

Where friend holds fellowship with friend;

Tho' sundered far, by faith they meet

Around one common mercy-seat.

There, there on eagle's wings we soar, And sin and sense seem all no more,

And heav'n comes down our souls to greet,

And glory crowns the mercy-seat.

- Hugh Stowell

“YE ASK AND RECEIVE NOT”

GOD, who is a God of law and order, has set certain conditions upon the fulfillment of which depends His promise to hear and answer our prayers.

First, we must have pure hearts. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psalms 66:18).

This means that the man who continually practices sin and who has in his heart a purpose to commit sin, and who clings to sin, has no claim upon the ear of God.

Prayer that God promises to answer must come also from an unselfish heart. “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3).

Man has no right to ask God for something which he wants to use merely for the gratification of his own desires or for his own personal satisfaction.

Prayer to be heard must come from a yielded heart—a heart submissive to God’s will. “If we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us” (1 John 5:14).

A heart thus yielded will certainly be a heart that is pure and a heart that is unselfish. The life in which the will of God is foremost is a life which has no room for impurity and selfishness.

Prayer without faith God nowhere promises to answer. A believing heart is essential if we are to meet the conditions which God places upon our access to Him with our petitions. Jesus said to His disciples, “All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matthew 21:22).

The Lord Jesus Christ said our prayers should be in His Name. “Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13).

- Only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are men saved.
- Only through His blood are sins washed away,
- Only in Him do we become children of God.

How proper, therefore, that our prayers to our Father should be in the Name and for the sake of Him who has made our sonship possible. In Christ’s Name we may bring our petitions to our Heavenly Father, and “he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

There is an eye that never sleeps Beneath the wing of night;

There is an ear that never shuts When sink the beams of light.

There is an arm that never tires

When human strength gives way;

There is a love that never fails

When earthly loves decay.

That eye unseen o'erwatcheth all; That arm upholds the sky;

That ear doth hear the sparrow call; That love is ever nigh.

-James Cowden Wallace ~ end of chapter 7 ~

01.08. Be Not Afraid, But Speak

“Be Not Afraid, But Speak”

(Acts 18:9) CHAPTER EIGHT

FAITH AT WORK

THERE was a sick man who had some fine friends who did more than sympathize with him in his sickness and tell him that they felt sorry for him. They carried him to Jesus to be healed.

When they came to the house in which the Lord was teaching, the crowd was so large that they could not get in, but, not to be discouraged, they climbed on the flat, Oriental roof, lifted several tiles and with ropes lowered the sick man on his bed until he lay at Jesus' feet.

The man was healed by the power of the Son of God, but his friends had a share in the healing. Except for their efforts he would never have been brought to the Saviour. Those men had evidently seen the miracles which He had performed on other sick bodies. They had faith that Christ could heal their friend. They gave evidence of that faith when they brought him to Christ; they gave evidence not only of faith but also of character and determination when they failed to let the crowd deter them in their efforts and defeat them in their purpose.

There are many Christian people who know the power of Christ today. They have felt the manifestation of His power in their own lives in the forgiveness of their sins. They have seen the demonstration of His power in the lives of others. They have friends who need the miraculous touch of Christ, who are living in sin, who are victims of habits which they cannot conquer and of evil which cripples them spiritually and morally; yet they never make an effort to bring these friends to Christ.

Every Christian has a responsibility to make Christ known to men, yet all too many Christians are so busy about business or pleasure or the pursuit of selfish ambition that they neglect to speak for the Lord or to bring those needy ones into His presence.

Others set out to lead men to Christ but become discouraged before the task is done. Christians today need a determination that tears holes in roofs to bring poor, sin-sick men and women to the feet of the Saviour.

Christian soul, the times are calling,

Altars falling, Men's hearts failing them for fear;

Unto thee their eyes are turning, Spirits yearning, For the word of faith and cheer.

Christian soul, great deeds await thee,

Consecrate thee To the task that nearest lies;

Question not that God will use thee, Nor refuse thee Blessing on thy sacrifice.

Walk thou not as one benighted,

Nor affrighted, Where the foolish see no God;

Thine to glimpse the fiery column,

Thine the solemn Comfort of His staff and rod!

- Louise Belts Edwards

NO UNION RULES

CHRIST said to Peter, "Feed my sheep" (John 21:16).

That was a strange command to give Peter. Peter was not a shepherd. He was a fisherman. He was to follow Jesus and be a soul-winner, an evangelist. Christ's call to Peter had been to follow Him and be a fisher of men (Matthew 4:19), but the Saviour, just before ascending to heaven, gave to Peter this command to feed His sheep-the duty of the pastor, the shepherd. The inference here is plain indeed. No disciple of the Lord is called to only one task and is completely free from the responsibility of every other. A child of God has the obligation of performing any service which he may find at hand.

The Bible plainly teaches that God has called every Christian to certain specific tasks and has given him the gifts and talents necessary for the successful performance of those tasks, but this does not relieve the Christian from obligations and duties outside his own particular field.

Every Christian should be a soul-winner, though certainly all Christians are not called to be evangelists or pastors or foreign missionaries.

The Christian mother in her home has first of all a responsibility toward her own family and the duty of caring for her own children, but her obligations do not end here. Everywhere she goes she should by her life and actions testify for her Lord.

The Christian businessman has the responsibility of his business and the duty of providing for his family, but he has a responsibility beyond these. He is also obliged to witness and testify to the saving power of Christ. There is the duty of helping to finance the spread of the Gospel, and there is the obligation of the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak.

I have known Christians who were so interested in foreign missions that they neglected the opportunities at their front doors. I have known Christian men, occupied with the effort of earning a living and providing material comforts for their families, who allowed their own boys to grow up virtually as strangers to them, without the companionship which every son has a right to expect of his father.

Modern life is complex. No Christian in this day has only one responsibility. In using the particular gifts with which God has endowed us and in following the path of service to which we have been called, we sometimes forget that we have an obligation to take advantage of every opportunity for service and testimony which God sends our way in whatever field of endeavor it may be.

Go, labor on! spend and be spent;
Thy joy to do the Father's will:
It is the way the Master went-
Should not the servant tread it still?
Go, labor on! 'tis not for nought,
Thine earthly loss is heavenly gain;
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises-what are men?
Toil on, faint not, keep watch and pray;
Be wise the erring soul to win;
Go forth into the world's highway,
Compel the wanderer to come in.
Toil on, and in thy toil rejoice!
For toil comes rest, for exile home;
Soon shalt thou hear the Bridegroom's voice,
The midnight peal, "Behold, I come!"

- Horatius Bonar

IN STRANGE PLACES

THE Bible opens to the thoughtful reader rich treasure houses of thought with the golden key of a brief phrase. How the imagination is stimulated as one reads what Paul, writing to the Philippians from Rome, said: "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Php 4:22).

What were they like-those Christians in Nero's palace? It seems strange to find saints members of Nero's official family. Were they poor slaves doing the menial tasks? Were they officers of his guard? Did they plan the meals and spread the banquets? Did one act as a scribe taking down the imperial decrees? Did another supervise the wardrobe of the empress?

We may never know in this life anything specific about these unknown Christians from whom the apostle sent greetings. But this we do know, that even in the house of the inhuman monster Nero dwelt some of God's own children. In the midst of the corruption and licentiousness of Caesar's household were some of God's saints. Surrounded by the wickedness and depravity of as corrupt a court as ever rotted in its sin, there were some who served Christ and whose affections were fixed on heavenly things.

The Christian whose heart is firmly set to be true to God and whose eyes are fixed on Christ can stand true to his Lord no matter in what environment he has to live. God's children need not become defiled by the filth of the world nor corrupted with its deadly poison.

Meshach, Shadrach, Abednego and Daniel had been taken from their homeland to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. There in his palace they refused to defile themselves with the king's meat and drink of his wines. The first three were thrown into a fiery furnace rather than bow to the image set up by the king, and Daniel was cast into the den of lions rather than forsake even for a period of thirty days his time of prayer and communion with God.

The Christian who purposes in his heart to serve God has divine resources at his command. His God is a sovereign more powerful than any earthly king or emperor. Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;

Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art-

Thou my best thought, by day or by night,

Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;

I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;

Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;

Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,

Thou mine inheritance, now and always;

Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,

High King of heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won, May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall, Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

- Ancient Irish Hymn

IDENTIFICATION TAG

PETER and John were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin for preaching "through Jesus the resurrection from the dead" (Acts 4:2). These two fishermen were not frightened as they stood on trial before the very men who had condemned Jesus to death. Arrested for preaching to the people, they now preached to the Sanhedrin with such boldness and logic that when the council perceived that they were unlearned and "ignorant" men, "they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). These men, as His disciples, had followed God's Son for three years. They had lived in daily, close, personal contact with Him. Into the lives of these ordinary, lowly men had come a likeness to the Son of God.

One always becomes like his associates. A couple whose lives are blended together through years of marriage grow somewhat like each other. A student acquires not only something of the knowledge and the point of view of the teacher whom he admires, but oftentimes assumes something of his manner and peculiarities.

The influence of our associates upon our lives it is impossible to measure, but that there is an influence no man can deny. In habits, in language, in thought itself we reflect those with whom we constantly mingle.

The man who walks with God becomes like God. The Christian who fellowships daily with the Saviour reveals to others in his own life a Christlike personality.

Paul, referring to the scars he had received as a result of persecution for Christ's sake, said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). The Christian who is much with Christ will bear in his soul the marks of his Lord. Men, seeing the sweetness and power of his life, will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. Our God is love; and all His saints His image bear below:

The heart with love to God inspired

With love to man will glow.

Teach us to love each other, Lord, As we are loved by Thee;

None who are truly born of God

Can live in enmity.

Heirs of the same immortal bliss,

Our hopes and fears the same,

With bonds of love our hearts unite,

With mutual love inflame.

So may the unbelieving world See how true Christians love;

And glorify our Saviour's grace,

And seek that grace to prove.

- Thomas Cotterill

BUILDING SILENTLY

THE world has seen few buildings as magnificent as Solomon's Temple, but one of the most amazing things about this structure was the complete silence which attended its building. "There was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building" (1 Kings 6:7). The stones were dressed in the quarries. The cedar wood brought from Lebanon was prepared before its arrival on the Temple site. The metal work was brought already prepared and installed quietly.

Possibly back of this silence was a feeling of reverence. This was God's house, a place for sacrifice to the Lord and for the worship of the Lord God. It was appropriate that it be built in an atmosphere of quiet reverence. Possibly efficiency and convenience were also reasons for building silently. With stones dressed and smoothed where they were quarried, it was unnecessary to transport surplus material which should be cut away and not used in the building.

The silence with which the huge and beautiful Temple was built is full of spiritual suggestion. It suggests the quiet way in which God works in carrying out His purposes in the world. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to reign will be a spectacular coming, but the preparation of His bride in the redemption of men and women throughout the world is quiet in comparison with the noise and tumult which attend less important movements.

The most important events are not always the noisiest and the most spectacular. God does not always speak in the sound of the wind and the fire and the earthquake. His word is sometimes heard in the still small voice.

That which is destructive is generally noisy. The loudest politician is not always the most able statesman. The clamoring voice of the majority is no guarantee of the truth and value of that which they acclaim.

The quiet Christian who lives a life of daily obedience to God is worth more to the world than all its noisy demagogues.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee!

O calm of hills above,

Where Jesus knelt to share with thee

The silence of eternity, Interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness Till all our strivings cease;

Take from our souls the strain and stress,

And let our ordered lives confess The beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire

Thy coolness and thy balm;

Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire:

Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,

O still small voice of calm.

- John G. Whittier

AT HIS FEET

How frequently in the Gospels we read of men and women at the feet of Jesus. As He sat at meat one day a woman of the street came and kissed His feet, washing them with her tears and drying

them with her hair (Luke 7:38). Coming with tears of remorse for her sins, she found forgiveness at His feet. So does any sinner.

Christ cast a legion of demons out of a poor creature living naked in the tombs (Luke 8:27-35), and when he was next seen by those who knew him, he was clothed, "sitting at the feet of Jesus." Here at His feet no demon can control and here the one who has experienced His miraculous power in his life should desire to remain, looking up into His face.

On another occasion a ruler of the synagogue ran to Jesus and flung himself at His feet, begging Him to come to His house where his little daughter, twelve years old, lay dying (Luke 8:41-42). Here was a man bringing his need to the feet of Christ. Here we may, too, make our desires known; here we can plead our needs with the assurance of having them heard and satisfied.

A leper that Christ had cleansed came back to fall in thanksgiving at His feet (Luke 17:16). This is the position to which gratitude should force us who know His mercy and His love. When we have seen His goodness, how can we fail to kneel in praise at His feet!

John on the isle of Patmos beheld Christ in glory and fell at His feet as dead (Revelation 1:17).

No man can behold the glory of the Son of God without being conscious of his own humility and unworthiness and weakness.

There is a day coming when all things shall be put under His feet. Every knee shall bow to Him. Kings will cast their crowns before Him. Then those who have loved Him here will have the joy of reigning with Him in glory. Now we may in the study of His Word and in communion with Him sit at His feet to be taught by Him.

Master, no offering Costly and sweet, May we, like Magdalene, Lay at Thy feet;

Yet may love's incense rise, Sweeter than sacrifice, Dear Lord, to Thee.

Daily our lives would show

Weakness made strong,

Toilsome and gloomy ways

Brightened with song;

Some deeds of kindness done,

Some souls by patience won,

Dear Lord, to Thee.

Some word of hope for hearts Burdened with fears, Some balm of peace for eyes Blinded with tears, Some dews of mercy shed, Some wayward footsteps led, Dear Lord, to Thee.

Thus, in Thy service, Lord,

Till eventide

Closes the day of life,

May we abide; And when earth's labors cease,

Bid us depart in peace,

Dear Lord, to Thee.

-Edwin P. Parker ~ end of chapter 8 ~

01.09. What Shall I Render Unto the Lord

“What Shall I Render Unto the Lord”

(Psalms 116:12) CHAPTER NINE

FATHER KNOWS BEST

IT IS a good thing that God does not always answer our prayers in just the way in which we take for granted that He will. Sometimes we expect Him to say, “Yes,” but instead He says, “No.”

We are often like children who are conscious only of the fact that we want something, and because we want it we ask God for it. If a little son should ask his father for a knife, of course, a wise and loving father would not give it to him since he might be injured by it. God, who is not only infinite in His love but who is also infinitely wise, knows that the thing we sometimes desire would not be for our good. In His mercy He refuses us that which, while desirable from our standpoint, He knows would be harmful. We know the immediate desire; God sees the eternal result.

Elijah, discouraged, thought he was the only one left alive who loved and honored God, and he prayed to die. Instead of sending death to the prophet, the Lord made him know that there were seven thousand faithful servants of God left, and Elijah’s petition was never granted then or later, for he never died. Instead, he was taken into heaven by a whirlwind and a chariot of fire.

Elijah, under the juniper tree, was ready to give up the struggle, but God had further work for him to do. Elijah, depressed and discouraged, made an unwise request. God, who saw rich ministry stretching out ahead, who planned to send a heavenly chariot to take the prophet home when that work was completed, would have been unkind had He answered Elijah’s prayer by granting him his request for death. The trouble with Elijah’s prayer was this: it was not in the will of God. We should be sure that our prayers are always in line with His will.

Christ Himself set us the example when He prayed, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).

Father, I know that all my life Is portioned out for me;

The changes that are sure to come I do not fear to see;

I ask Thee for a present mind Intent on pleasing Thee.

I ask Thee for a thoughtful love,

Through constant watching wise, To meet the glad with joyful smiles,

And wipe the weeping eyes; A heart at leisure from itself,

To soothe and sympathize.

I ask Thee for the daily strength, To none that asked denied,

A mind to blend with outward life While keeping at Thy side;
Content to fill a little space, If Thou be glorified.
And if some things I do not ask Among my blessings be,
I'd have my spirit filled the more With grateful love to Thee;
More careful, not to serve Thee much, But please Thee perfectly.
In service which Thy love appoints There are no bonds for me;
My secret heart is taught the truth That makes Thy children free:
A life of self-renouncing love Is one of liberty.

- Anna L. Waring

IN "MITE-Y" MEASURE

STANDING one day in the Temple, the Lord Jesus Christ watched the crowd pass by and cast their offerings into the treasury. Rich men passed by casting in large gifts. Then came a poor widow who dropped in two mites, about a quarter of a cent in our money. The Saviour called His disciples unto Him and said to them,

"Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living" (Mark 12:43-44).

A gift is to be judged not by its value but by the spirit in which it is given. An offering is to be measured not by the amount given but by the amount left after the gift has been offered. In the Temple that day, rich men brought rich gifts. Doubtless some gave because their social position demanded it. Some gave out of compliance with tradition. Possibly some gave to be seen of men and admired for their beneficence. Some may have given out of a natural generosity of heart. But all of them had infinitely more left over for themselves than they gave to the Lord.

A poor widow, who must have made her offering out of a heart full of love for God, since her circumstances were such that no one could have expected her to give, nevertheless cast in her offering. Having given, she retained nothing. Her gift was greatest because she alone of all who made offerings that day did not consider herself.

It is fine to give generously to the Lord's work. Sometimes, however, our gifts come not from hearts full of love but from either a cold sense of obligation or from fear of what people will think of us if we do not give. Judged by the standard which Christ fixed that day in the Temple, most of us give poor gifts because we keep much more than we give away.

God wants our gifts, but He wants more than the gifts. He wants the giver. Our money is not enough. God wants our hearts. The truly surrendered child of God considers all that he has—possessions, family, life itself—not his but God's. He has given to God everything that he possesses. The gift is given and the giver also.

Lord, in the strength of grace, With a glad heart and free,

Myself, my residue of days, I consecrate to Thee.

Thy ransomed servant, I Restore to Thee Thine own;

And, from this moment, live or die To serve my God alone.

- Charles Wesley

A PIECE OF ROPE

WICKED men were waiting at the gates of Damascus to kill the Apostle Paul. Since it was impossible for him to get out of the city by means of the gates without falling into the hands of these men, friends let Paul over the wall in a basket.

A man's life depended upon a piece of rope and a wicker basket. These were little, inexpensive things, but very important in that situation. They sustained more than the physical weight of the man. On that rope depended the future ministry of Paul to Israel and his preaching to the Gentiles. On that piece of cord hung suspended the blessing which was to come into thousands of lives through Paul's work and words.

In that basket were all the churches Paul was to found in Asia Minor and in Greece. In that basket were all the converts Paul was to make throughout the ancient world, and all the epistles which he was yet to write-full of instruction and blessing to every generation that has opened the Word of God and read them.

Little things - a life preserver for a drowning man, a glass of water for the desert traveler faint with thirst, a crust of bread for one dying of starvation-are tremendous things! A train may be wrecked because of a small flaw in the steel of the rail or because one spike has become loosened from the crosstie; one match can start a fire which destroys a city. Trifles can change the course of history. A few words can ruin a reputation. One act can wreck a life.

A great universe is made up of atoms and electrons. The God who is the God of the universe is also the God of little things. The God who used the rod of Moses to bring plagues on Egypt and who took five loaves and two fishes from the lunch basket as a little boy and fed thousands can use our little talents and these poor lives. Upon one word of ours may hang the eternal destiny of some soul. Upon some thoughtless act may hinge the course of a life.

If we surrender to God all we possess, however weak and unimportant and useless it may seem to us, He will bless and use it beyond our expectation and in excess of all we can imagine.

What will it matter in a little while That for a day we met and gave a word, A touch, a smile upon the way?

What will it matter whether hearts were brave And lives were true, that you gave me The sympathy I craved, as I gave you?

These trifles, can it be

They make or mar a human life?

Are souls as lightly waved as rushes

Are by storm or strife? Yeah! Yeah!

A look the failing heart may break,

Or make it whole. And just a word said for love's sweet sake

May save a soul.

- Anonymous

PRESUMPTUOUS ARGUMENTS

IT IS strange how men will argue with God. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush, telling him He had chosen him to lead Israel out of the Egyptian bondage. One would expect that Moses would have been willing to trust the Lord's judgment to choose the right man for the job. Was he? If you will turn to Exodus 3:1-22 and Exodus 4:1-31 you will find the answer.

Those two chapters are filled with the arguments of Moses used in an effort to convince God that He had made a mistake. Gideon was guilty of the same attitude. God sent an angel to him with a divine commission to free the people of Israel from the oppression of the Midianites. Instead of being humbly grateful that God had chosen him for such a task and going forth with confidence to accomplish the work which God had selected him to perform, he was full of mealy-mouthed protestations that his family was "poor in Manasseh," and that he was "the least in his father's house" (Judges 6:15).

Look at Jeremiah. Courageous soul and uncompromising in his loyalty to the Lord in the face of persecution and oppression though he was, he, too, when he first heard the voice of God calling him for the special service argued that he was not the right man. "I am a child" (Jeremiah 1:6), he said. What he meant was, "I am not big enough for the job. You had better choose somebody else."

How greatly God used these three men! What triumphant plans He had in mind for each, and how fully those plans were realized, but first He had to overcome their objections as each said in effect when He called him, "I am not the right man. You had better get somebody else."

God knows the need, and He always chooses the right man to meet the need. God is not so much interested in great talent and ability as He is in simple obedience. He will provide the skill and the power. He asks the man or the woman whom He selects and calls to provide a yielded heart and a surrendered will.

Time was, I shrank from what was right
From fear of what was wrong;

I would not brave the sacred fight,

Because the foe was strong.

But now I cast that finer sense
And sorer shame aside;

Such dread of sin was indolence,
Such aim at heaven was pride.

So when my Saviour calls, I rise
And calmly do my best;

Leaving to Him, with silent eyes Of hope and fear, the rest.

I step, I mount where He has led;

Men count my haltings o'er:

I know them; yet though self I dread, I love His precept more.

- John Henry Newman

“CHOOSE YE THIS DAY”

“GOD is on our side,” said the counselor to the statesman. “I am not eager to have God on my side,” he replied. “My concern is to be sure that I am on God’s side.”

The man who takes his place on the side of the almighty God is the man who chooses victory and immortality. “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17). God’s plan shall be perfected. God’s will shall be performed. “The battle is the Lord’s” (1 Samuel 17:47). The triumph shall be His and the man who puts himself on the side of the Conqueror will share in the glory of the conquest.

The man who does God’s will has at his command all the omnipotence of Deity. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great preacher, declared, “Luther’s strength lay in the way in which he laid the burden of the Reformation on the Lord. Continually in prayer he pleaded, ‘Lord, this is Thy cause, not mine. Therefore, do Thy own work: for if this Gospel does not prosper, it will not be Luther alone who will be a loser, but Thine own Name will be dishonored.’”

Queen Elizabeth once said to a merchant whom she sent abroad in her service and who was worried about what would happen to his business in his absence, “You mind my business and I will mind yours.” The man who is busy about God’s business most successfully takes care of his own.

The life that is successful is the life that joins itself to the program of God. Our prayer should not be for God to go with us, but rather for grace to go with Him. Enoch did not choose a path and invite God to join him. Enoch sought out the direction in which God was going and joined himself to Deity. Enoch walked with God. It is not the business of the servant to plan the journey. It is not the business of the soldier to order the campaign. It is the servant’s task to follow the master and the duty of the soldier to obey the orders given him by his commander. The successful life is the life planned and directed by God. In the still air the music lies unheard;

In the rough marble beauty hides unseen;

To make the music and the beauty needs

The Master’s touch, the Sculptor’s chisel keen.

Great Master, touch us with Thy skillful hand;

Let not the music that is in us die!

Great Sculptor, hew and polish us; nor let,

Hidden and lost, Thy form within us be!

Spare not the stroke. Do with us as Thou wilt.

Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred.

Complete Thy purpose, that we may become

Thy perfect image, Thou our God and Lord.

- Horatius Bonar

HANDS OFF!

SOLOMON, the wisest of men, nowhere demonstrated his wisdom better than in the blessing which he bestowed upon Israel after the dedication of the Temple, which he had built. He said to Israel, "And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require" (1 Kings 8:59).

Solomon demonstrated his wisdom in not trying to dictate a method to the Lord as to how He should maintain the cause of His people. He was wise enough to realize that as the matter should require the Lord would know how to deal with it.

How much happier men would be if they would commit their lives to God, completely trusting Him to do in His own way the thing which is best. A man who seeks to run his own life, leaving God out and trying to have his own way, will sooner or later find himself in trouble. Some people realize this and seek God's protection and guidance. They go so far as to ask that God's will may be done in their lives, but they then make the mistake of trying to tell God how He should accomplish His purpose and of deciding for Him what method is best. God's judgment needs no help from us.

- He knows that the method which will solve today's problems will be inadequate for the problems which tomorrow brings.

- He knows that those things which seem good to us today may prove a curse tomorrow.

- He knows that those things which we find attractive now we may turn from with repugnance later.

- He knows that what seems a sure way to victory now may prove a trap to defeat next year.

The wise man commits his life to God and leaves it in the care of His love and divine wisdom, assured that the Lord will maintain his cause "as the matter shall require."

O Lord, fulfill Thy will, Be the days few or many, good or ill:

Prolong them, to suffice For offering up ourselves Thy sacrifice;

Shorten them if Thou wilt, To make in righteousness an end of guilt.

Yea, they will not be long To souls who learn to sing a patient song:

Yea, short they will not be To souls on tiptoe to flee home to Thee.

O Lord, fulfill Thy will, Make Thy will ours, and keep us patient still, Be the days few or many, good or ill.

- Christina G. Rossetti

THE PRAISE OF WRATH

THERE is no such thing as “blind chance” in the life of God’s surrendered children. If there was ever a man who seemed “a victim of circumstances,” that man was Joseph. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, unjustly imprisoned, he had from the standpoint of the world every reason to complain of “hard luck” and “tough breaks.” Yet nowhere in the record of his life does the Bible mention that he felt discouraged and dissatisfied. Always he was upheld by the assurance that God directed his life and led his steps. Finally, when the hour came that as the prime minister of Egypt he revealed his identity to the brothers who had sold him into slavery, he said to them, “So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God” (Genesis 45:8).

Joseph looked upon the unkindness and hostility of his brothers not as misfortune and hardship that came into his life, but rather as God’s means of bringing him to Egypt, that there as God’s instrument he might preserve many lives through his administration and wisdom in the day of famine. With this point of view there was no place for bitterness toward his brethren, no desire to “get even,” only a kindness of heart and a forgiveness of spirit.

Such faith in the leadership and direction of a sovereign God in our lives should characterize all of us today who love the Lord and believe His Word, and with such faith in God’s wisdom, love, and guidance there is no place for worry or unhappiness when the circumstances are not those which we would have chosen, and no place for bitterness against those who wrong or abuse us. All the apparent hardships in Joseph’s life worked together for God’s purpose and Joseph’s good.

Joseph committed his way unto the Lord and trusted in Him, and God directed his path. We have the promise that He will do the same for us (Psalms 37:5). The hatred of Joseph’s brethren started him on the path to a throne. God turned the evil which they did Joseph into a blessing. A sovereign Lord still makes “all things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). In our lives He can make the wrath of men to praise Him (Psalms 76:10) just as surely as He made the wrath of Joseph’s brethren abound to His own glory in the life and testimony of that remarkable man.

Clouds, then the glory of sunset;

Darkness, then burst of the mom;

Dearth, then the gentle shower;

Sacrifice-Truth is born!

The earth-throe, then comes the harvest;

Silence, and then the word;

Mist, before the full starlight;

Discord, ere music is heard!

Erring, and then the forgiveness;

Heart's-ease, after the strife;

Passion, and then the refining-

Death, then the wonder of life!

- Henry Meade Bland

FORWARD MARCH

IT IS to be doubted if any group of people were ever more "on the spot" than were the Israelites on the occasion described in the fourteenth chapter of Exodus. As the Lord had promised, they had been led by Moses out of Egypt and were camped upon the shores of the Red Sea. Pharaoh's army had followed them to slay them or bring them back. It looked as if there was no escape. They were between Pharaoh and the Red Sea.

Moses, the leader, was a man of great faith. He knew the Lord had not freed the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt to let them fall victims of the Egyptian army on the beach. "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," he said to the trembling, frightened multitude, adding, "The Lord shall fight for you."

The Lord did fight for them, but not while they "stood still." God said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward," and Moses, following the instruction of God, lifted up his rod over the waters of the sea, and they divided and the children of Israel went through on dry ground.

When they were safely across, Moses again lifted up his rod, and the water rushed in to engulf the pursuing Egyptians. The Lord fought for Israel, but the battlefield was in the midst of the divided sea through which they had passed - not where they had encamped and where Moses had instructed them to stand still.

It is a great comfort and a strong source of confidence to know that the Lord will undertake and fight for His own- that the place of our seeming defeat is the place where He can best show His power. But God does not want us to stand still. His command to His children in this day is, in the face of seeming impossibilities, to trust and move forward.

Of course, there are moments when we have to stand still a little while and wait on the Lord, but when the Lord wants a man in a certain place to do a certain job, He will open the way, even if it takes a miracle as great as the dividing of the Red Sea. God wanted Israel in the Land of Promise. He was to show them His salvation many times there, and on the way there, but He did not intend for them merely to stand still by the Red Sea, and when He said, "Go forward," He made the going possible.

Lord, carry me-"Nay, but I grant thee strength

To walk and work thy way to heaven at length."

Lord, why then am I weak?-"Because I give

Power to the weak, and bid the dying live."

Lord, I am tired.-“He hath not much desired
The goal, who at the starting-point is tired.”
Lord, dost Thou know? - “I know what is in man;
What the flesh can, and what the spirit can.”
Lord, dost Thou care?-"Yes, for thy gain or loss
So much I cared, it brought me to the cross.”
Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.
“Good is the word; but rise, for life is brief.
The follower is not greater than the Chief:
Follow thou Me along My way of grief.”

-Christina G. Rossetti

HIDDEN THINGS OF TOMORROW

I AM glad that as a child of God I do not have to plan my own future. I am quite content to leave it in the hand of Him who knows the end from the beginning. That which looks very wise to me today may, in the light of tomorrow's now unborn moments, prove to have been foolish in the extreme.

The man who trusts God completely and who accepts with unquestioning obedience the will and commands of God will always find that those things which happen to him today, though they may seem today unfortunate, will tomorrow be golden links in a chain of blessing. Illness, which may necessitate a move to another climate and which seems from the viewpoint of the moment almost a tragedy, may be God's way of putting His child in the place where special blessing awaits him. The bitter waters of sorrow forced to my lips may cause me to cry out for relief to God and in new reliance upon Him I shall find crystal streams of abundant joy.

No man knows what tomorrow will bring forth. The Christian does not need to know, for whatever it brings forth will prove a blessing for him. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

The darkness of sorrow brings to the ear of the Christian the melody of songs which were drowned by the laughter of the day, and the flames of a martyr's death become the wings of a fiery chariot bearing a victorious saint to glory. How wise to leave our tomorrows with Him who orders all our ways!

I have nothing to do with tomorrow,
My Saviour will make that His care;
Its grace and its strength I can't borrow,
So why should I borrow its care?

* * *

Jesus, Fountain of my days,
Well-spring of my heart's delight,
Brightness of my morning rays,
Solace of my hours of night!
When I see Thee I arise
To the hope of cloudless skies.

Lord, Thy presence on the deep Calms the pulses of the sea, And the waters sink to sleep In the rest of seeing Thee, And my oft rebellious will Hears the mandate, "Peace, be still!"

Now Thy will and mine are one,
Heart in heart and hand in hand;
All the clouds have touched the sun,
All the ships have reached the land;
For Thy love has said to me,
"No more night!" and "No more sea!"

- George Matheson

SHOES TO FIT

To understand the Bible properly one needs some knowledge of the geography of Bible lands. Without it some verses can mean little to the reader. For example, in Deuteronomy 33:1-29, Moses in blessing the tribes of Israel says of Asher, "Let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass" (Deuteronomy 33:24-25). The significance of this prophetic blessing is realized when we know something of the territory which Asher received when the tribes of Israel came into possession of the Promised Land.

Asher's territory combined fertile land near the base of Mt. Lebanon and rocky hills along the coastline. The fertile country was rich in olive groves and the people trampled barefoot upon the olives in the vats to press out the oil. In the rocky hills they needed shoes reinforced with iron and brass. Ordinary leather shoes would not last long against the sharp stones of the rocky mountain passes. Knowing the topography of the land which Asher came to possess, we understood the meaning of the words of Moses' prophetic blessing upon Asher.

God's children may encourage their hearts with the spiritual significance in these words: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." It is this: God provides abundantly for that which we must meet. He knows when we shall have to walk rough mountain trails along the road of life. He will not send us there unshod. God knows when sorrow will come. He will prepare us in advance to endure the sorrow.

God knows the temptation which lies in wait. He will "not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape" (1 Corinthians 10:13). The last

clause of the verse we should take with the first, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

Years ago, when I Was just a little lad,

An’ after school hours used to work Around the farm with Dad,

I used to be so wearied out When eventide was come, That I got kinder anxious-like About the journey home;

But Dad, he used to lead the way,

An’ once in awhile turn ‘round an’ say, So cheerin’ like, so tender, “Come!

Come on, my son, you’re nearly home!” That allers used to help me some;

An’ so I followed Father home.

I’m old an’ gray an’ feeble now, An’ trembly at the knee,

But life seems just the same today As then it seemed to me.

For while I am still so wearied out When eventide is come,

An’ still git kinder anxious-like About the journey home,

But still my Father leads the way,

An’ once in awhile I hear Him say, So cheerin’ like, so tender, “Come!

Come on, My son, you’re nearly home!”

An’ same as then, that helps me some,

And so I’m following Father home.

- John Talman

THE MARKET PRICE

A FEW days before His crucifixion, as our Lord was sitting at meat in the house of His friends in Bethany, Mary came with an alabaster box of precious ointment. She broke the box, poured the ointment upon His head and so anointed Him with it that its perfume filled the room.

Mark says of the incident, “And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence” (Mark 14:4-5).

These people were right about the value of the ointment. It could have been sold in the market for more than three hundred pence. No one can blame them for knowing the market price of ointment. But Jesus Christ Himself showed how wrong they were in thinking it was being wasted.

He said, “Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me” (Mark 14:6).

Nothing is wasted which is given to God. No treasure is so valuable as when it is broken as an offering to Him. "It might have been sold," but one of the sweetest acts in the whole New Testament would have gone unperformed if it had been.

I was talking not long ago to a woman about her profession. I said, "I should think you'd enjoy your work. It seems to me that it affords a wonderful opportunity for service."

She replied, "I studied for this profession because it was the easiest way I could think of to make a living." A man or a woman should try to make a living, but what a poor reason for choosing a lifework! That is simply a selling of one's talents and abilities.

There are some people who cannot understand why a man should preach the Gospel since it pays so little. Men who love money and who judge success by the size of a man's income are at a loss to understand why a man will go to Africa as a missionary when he could stay home and become a wealthy man. They are like those who said at Bethany that day, "Why was this waste of the ointment made?"

No life is wasted which is offered in service to Christ. The only life which is well invested is that which, like the offering of the alabaster box of ointment, is broken for His sake and offered as a tribute of love to Him.

Five broken loaves beside the sea and thousands fed,

As Thy hand, Lord, in breaking, blessed the bread.

Men would the throng in emptiness have sent away

Whose need was met with broken bread that day.

A broken vase of priceless worth rich fragrance shed
In ointment poured in worship on Thy head.
A lovely thing all shattered thus-What waste, they thought.
But Mary's deed of love Thy blessing brought.

A broken form upon the cross and souls set free.

Thy anguish there has paid the penalty-

Sin's awful price in riven flesh and pain and blood-

Redemption's cost, the broken Lamb of God.

Oh, break my life if it must be. No longer mine, I give it Thee.

Oh, break my will; the off'ring take. For blessing comes when Thou dost break.

- Bob Jones, Jr.

~ end of book ~

02.00.1. SHOWERS UPON THE GRASS

SHOWERS UPON THE GRASS A companion volume to As the Small Rain by Bob Jones, Jr., LITT. D., L.H.D., LL.D., D.D.

President, Bob Jones University Greenville, South Carolina Zondervan Publishing House Grand Rapids Michigan

02.00.2. Preface to the e-Sword Edition

Preface to the e-Sword Edition When I first discovered the amazing power of e-Sword, I was connected to the internet with a 56k fax modem. My enthusiasm for the program and its plethora of resources motivated me to stay up all night downloading its riches. I spent the next several days exploring the amazing variety of study material. As a busy preacher, I've tried to assemble a classic research library. As a busy preacher with limited resources, I've tried to inexpensively assemble a classic research library. E-Sword immediately added many valuable assets that I hadn't yet purchased; and those resources that e-Sword duplicated were much easier and faster to use than the paper versions.

Since that wonderful first week, I've discovered many more treasures through Google searches. Then one day I realized that I owed a debt. I made a contribution to Rick Meyers (Rick - you are the modern day Gutenberg; should the Lord not return in the near future like I believe He will, you will do for Bible study the next 100 years what Gutenberg did in the 1500's), and then started looking for public domain resources to convert to .topx files. And so my personal journey has come full circle: from the excitement of discovering e-Sword to the excitement of creating .topx files for others. Like Rick quotes from Matthew 10:8, "freely ye have received, freely give."

Thank you, Michelle, Jeremiah, Isaiah & Micah, for understanding my debt and graciously tolerating my near compulsive computer use for hours on end. My thanks to the creator of e-Sword, Rick Meyers - www.e-sword.net. Thank you, "Dr. Bob", for converting your studies to eternal print. A special thanks goes out to Mr. Virgil Butts of www.BaptistBibleBelievers.com - the man who is responsible for converting the text to it's usable digital format: thanks, Virgil, for sharing your labor with all of us (if you haven't visited his site yet, I encourage you to stop by for lots of great study materials)! And of course - most importantly - my thanks to the Lord Jesus who saved my soul for all eternity. This Edition There have been no changes to Jones' work, except for the following:

Scripture references have been converted to Scripture hyperlinks using the "Format Scripture ToolTip."

A few obvious Scripture reference errors have been corrected, as well as some obvious spelling errors.

The copy and paste process has unfortunately removed most of the italicized print. While the words have not been changed, some of Jones' emphasis may be missing. It is with regret that I have not taken the time to correct this. The sense is still accurate. [By the way - would you understand this paragraph without italics? Of course!] Also, the italicizing of the foreign words have been lost. It is my hope that the reader will be able to follow the flow regardless of these flaws. They - the flaws - are mine, not Jones'.

I am quite sure my edition of Jones' work is rather imperfect. I pray that, nonetheless, it will be productively useful in the study of God's Word.

Finally Feel free to contact me with comments. You can reach me via e-mail at DoctorDaveT@gmail.com

Also, if you convert a classic resource to e-Sword .topx file (or .dctx, .cmtx, etc.), send me your work! I'd love to utilize it!

If you've enjoyed this module, and are interested in hundreds of other good, conservative Bible study modules, make sure you visit www.DoctorDaveT.com - your home for conservative Bible study modules built for eSword and The Word. May the Lord bless you as study His word.

Dr. David S. Thomason

Tennessee, USA

02.00.3. Copyright Information

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“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Proverbs 23:23)

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02.00.5. Publisher's Foreward

Publisher's Foreward

In his syndicated column, "A Look at the Book," Dr. Bob Jones, Jr., brings Biblical truth and inspiration to more than a million news paper readers weekly. Several years ago we asked Dr. Jones to choose ninety-eight of these articles and to select an appropriate poem to accompany each one. These we presented as a devotional book under the title As The Small Rain.

Now, in answer to popular demand, we are offering you another choice selection of these articles. You will find that they not only afford rich spiritual reading, but that they also provide outlines, materials and aids in the construction of sermons, devotional mes sages and brief radio talks.

02.01. Thou Shalt Love the Lord Thy God

“Thou Shalt Love the Lord Thy God”

FOOL'S HEART

CHAPTER ONE The existence of God is a self-evident fact. One has only to look about him at the wonders of the universe and at the beauties of nature to realize that back of all the visible creation is a Deity who planned and wrought it.

- The wonders of the heavenly bodies, hanging like myriad candles to light the capacious halls of space, reflect dimly the radiance of the Divine Mind which gives them light.
- The microscopic life teeming in a drop of water evidences with no less certainty the existence of the Author of all life.
- The glory of God gleams in the pyrotechnics of the aurora borealis.
- The power of God is apparent when the storm rides the wings of the wind.
- The majesty of God is manifested when the earth which He created trembles in His presence and the earthquake shakes the rocks.
- The beauty of the rainbow, unfurled like a banner across the heavens, proclaims His residence in His universe.

The mind of man can but recognize in the split second accuracy of planetary motion, in the ordered sequence of the seasons, in the cycle of the processes of life in nature, the presence of a divine mind, a divine hand—a divine Lord. Truly: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork” (Psalms 19:1).

The Psalmist declares: “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psalms 14:1). In the face of all the overwhelming evidence, the man who denies the existence of the Creator is nothing more than a fool. The Word of God, always so accurate, says that it is in his heart that the fool has said: “There is no God.” Despite all the evidence which must convince the mind of the fact of deity, many men in their self-willed hearts deny the existence of the eternal God.

God, by the very fact of His existence, demands worship and obedience. Some men, proud and rebellious and unwilling to submit themselves to these demands, in their hearts, where the pride and rebellion have their source, say there is no God. Such men, says the Bible, are “fools.” To a Snowflake

What heart could have thought you?— Past our devisal (O filigree petal!) Fashioned so purely, Fragilely, surely, From what Paradisiacal Imagineless metal, Too costly for cost? Who hammered you, wrought you, From argentine vapor?— “God was my shaper.

Passing surmised, He hammered, He wrought me, From curled silver vapor, To lust of His mind:-
Thou couldst not have thought me! So purely, so palely,

Tinily, surely, Mightily, frailty, Insculpated and embossed, With His hammer of wind, And His graver
of frost.”

- Francis Thompson

* * * THE KING ON HIGH

“In the year that king Uzziah died I saw . . . the Lord . . .” (Isaiah 6:1).

Isaiah had no doubt felt great hopes for the land when King Uzziah came to the throne. A noble, high-minded man, Uzziah seemed not only greatly gifted and wise in matters of government, but appeared also to be a spiritual man, devoted to the Lord. But, as is so often the case with men in positions of prominence and power, pride came into the heart of the king, and he usurped the office of the priest. He went into the Temple and made sacrifice to God—something that a king had no more right to do than any other layman during the Old Testament economy; and because of his sin and presumption, he was smitten with leprosy there in the Temple, and from the leprosy he died.

So the hopes of men set on the king were dashed, and there can be no doubt that those who were concerned for the cause of the nation were despondent.

Among these must have been Isaiah. But in the year that the king died, he saw the vision of the King, the Lord of Hosts, upon His throne, the One whose glory filled the Temple. Temporal monarchs die, but the King of the universe sits in power and majesty up on His throne. Wise is the man whose trust is set in Him and not in the power of the wisdom and the righteousness of men.

It is sometimes necessary for God to take away a great man if a nation is to trust in Him.

Sometimes even good men have to pass from the scene so that others may get the right perspective and turn their eyes upon God. Uzziah had brought much promise to the throne with him, but he died, a disappointment to his people, in sin and defeat. God is the never-changing One, the same yesterday, today and forever; the One who never disappoints those whose trust and hope is set in Him.

- Kings die; God reigns.

- Men fail; God is unfailing.

- The glories of mankind fade as the flesh of Uzziah faded under the blight of the leprosy.

- The glory of the Lord fills the universe.

“In the year that king Uzziah died,” Isaiah saw the King.

Happy is the man who never loses sight, amid the pomp and pageantry of human power, of the God of heaven and earth, who does not need to wait for the king to die to behold the King high and lifted up. The Lord Jehovah reigns, His throne is built on high;

The garments He assumes
Are light and majesty:

His glories shine with beams so bright,
No mortal eye can bear the sight. The thunders of His hand Keep the wide world in awe;
His wrath and justice stand To guard His holy law;
And where His love resolves to bless,
His truth confirms and seals the grace.
Through all His mighty works Amazing wisdom shines;
Confounds the powers of hell, And all their dark designs;
Strong is His arm, and shall fulfill
His great decrees and sovereign will.
And will this sovereign King Of glory condescend,
And will He write His name, My Father and my Friend?
I love His name, I love His Word;
Join all my powers to praise the Lord!

- Isaac Watts

* * * GOD'S FAMILY

God is not the Father of all men, and all men are not brothers one of another. This is true in spite of the popular misconceptions of our day. The teaching of the Bible is very plain on these matters.

God is the Creator of all men. He is the Father of men whom He has made, only in the sense that the watchmaker is the father of the watch. He is the Author of our being.

That "In him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28) is very clear, but He is not the Father of all men in the sense of the family relationship of father and child. Men are born into the family of God by faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. When by faith we are born again of God's Holy Spirit, we become His children. The very life of God becomes ours. We become, as the Word puts it, "Partakers of the Holy Ghost" (Hebrews 6:4). Until that miracle occurs, we have no right to call God our Father.

Those Jewish leaders who hated Jesus Christ were boasting of their claim on God, since they were descendants of Abraham whom God called; but Jesus declared to them: "Ye are of your father the devil" (John 8:44). "If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (John 8:42).

So then in the same fashion, men become brothers. Those who are children of the same father naturally are members of the same family and brothers one of another; and until men come into the proper relationship with God by accepting His Son, they are not brothers of each other.

Naturally, a Christian has an obligation to all men. It is his duty and his desire, if he be a true child of God, to do everything he can to help other men, not because they are all his brothers, but

because they are his neighbors and because, if the Spirit of the Lord Jesus is in control of his life, he will, like his Saviour, seek to manifest the proper attitude of kindness and consideration to all men. One of the apostles put it this way: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). A Christian has an obligation to men who are his neighbors; he has an obligation, also, to those who are of like precious faith, his brethren in Christ.

All men have a responsibility to God: He is the Creator. Only those who have accepted the gift of His love and open their hearts for His Son to enter, only those who have been born into His family, have the rights of sons and the privilege of claiming the rights of a child of the Heavenly Father.

O hearts are bruised and dead, And homes are bare and cold, And lambs for whom the Shepherd bled Are straying from the fold!

To comfort and to bless, To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless, Is angels' work below.
The captive to release, To God the lost to bring,
To teach the way of life and peace- It is a Christlike thing.
And we believe Thy Word, Though dim our faith may be;
Whate'er for Thine we do, O Lord, We do it unto Thee.

-William W. How

* * * THE IMPOSSIBLE SOLVED The Sadducees at the time of Christ thought of themselves as the wise and enlightened of their generation. They were too intellectual to believe in angels and immortality. They were above such things. In an attempt to trap Jesus, they came to Him with the story of a woman who outlived seven husbands, and they asked Him this question: "In the resurrection therefore, when they shall rise, whose wife shall she be of them?" (Mark 12:23).

They, no doubt, considered the difficulties which they felt would attend such a situation as this a very good reason for believing that there would be no resurrection of the dead. Doubtless this same manufactured incident which they had devised had raised an argument left unanswered in many a previous discussion with those who believed in the Resurrection.

"Do ye not therefore err," said Jesus, "because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?" (Mark 12:24). The Sadducees were proud of their logic and wisdom, but Jesus said to them, "You are in error, and it is an error which springs from ignorance."

Ignorance of God's power is the cause of many a spiritual error. The man who has experienced God's power in his own life has a living evidence within himself that God is great enough to solve the "impossible" and overcome the "insurmountable."

The man who was dead in trespasses and sin, but who has been born again of God's Spirit, will not likely question the Resurrection of the dead. When you know an omnipotent God you have no trouble in accepting the miraculous.

The Sadducees were in error because they were ignorant of the Scripture. The false religions of our modern day win their converts from among those who do not know the Word of God. Knowledge of the Scriptures will dispel superstition and error. The greatest difficulties in understanding the Bible face those who know the least about it.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). That has to do with a reverence for the power of God.

“The knowledge of the holy is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

No man can come to a knowledge of the Holy except as it is revealed in the Holy Word of God and by the Holy Spirit, who is the author of the Book.

Great truths are dearly bought. The common truth Such as men give and take from day to day,

Comes in the common walks of easy life, Blown by the careless wind across our way.

Bought in the market, at the current price,

Bred of the smile, the jest, perchance the bowl,

It tells no tale of daring or of worth,

Nor pierces even the surface of a soul.

Great truths are greatly won. Not found by chance,

Nor wafted on the breath of summer dream, But grasped in the great struggle of the soul,

Hard buffeting with adverse wind and stream. Not in the general mart, ‘mid corn and wine,

Not in the merchandise of gold and gems, Not in the world’s gay halls of midnight mirth,

Not ‘mid the blaze of regal diadems,

But in the day of conflict, fear and grief, When the strong hand of God, put forth in might, Plows up the subsoil of the stagnant heart, And brings the imprisoned truth seed to the light.

Wrung from the troubled spirit in hard hours Of weakness, solitude, perchance of pain,

Truth springs, like harvest, from the well-plowed field, And the soul feels it has not wept in vain.

- Horatius Bonar

* * *

DYING WORDS The dying words of great men hold a strange fascination for the living. It seems sometimes that God gives to good men, in the last fleeting moment of life a prophetic glimpse of things to come or special inspiration to speak words of truth and power.

Joseph was a good man; he was also a great man; and his dying words were, “I die: and God will surely visit you . . .” (Genesis 50:24). These words spoken to his family must have seemed to his descendants a long while in coming to fulfillment, if, indeed, they were remembered by them at all. Joseph died and Pharaoh died. The Bible tells us, “There arose up a new king over Egypt, which

knew not Joseph" (Exodus 1:8), and the people of Israel were made slaves to the Egyptians and set to hard tasks. They ate the bread of servitude and felt the lash upon their backs. Yet God in His own good time visited them and raised up Moses to lead them into freedom and set their feet upon a path toward national glory.

"I die: and God will surely visit you." These words are worth our consideration, too, and there is a truth in them for us; it is this: no man is indispensable, for there is a God who is greater than men, who gives to nations their leadership and who is mightier than any man whom He raises up. There is always a great danger in time of national distress or depression or war for a people to look blindly to a leader, trusting that he will bring deliverance and solve the problems. It is sometimes necessary for God to take away a great man in order to teach the nation anew that deliverance is not in the hand of any man but of the God who made heaven and earth, who lifts up nations and brings them low, who builds and destroys with a rod of iron. The most popular hero may pass away, the most beloved leader may die, but if the trust of the people is in God, surely He will visit them.

Let us with a gladsome mind

Praise the Lord for He is kind;

For His mercies aye endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us blaze His name abroad,

For of gods He is the God;

Who by all-commanding might,

Filled the new-made world with light.

He the golden tressed sun

Caused all day his course to run;

Th' horned moon to shine by night,

'Mid her spangled sisters bright.

He His chosen race did bless,

In the wasteful wilderness;

He hath, with a piteous eye,

Looked upon our misery.

All things living He doth feed.

His full hand supplies their need;

For His mercies aye endure,

Ever faithful, ever sure.

-John Milton

* * *

ETERNITY SET The King James version of the Bible does not always catch all the fullness of meaning in the language. Ecclesiastes 3:11 is thus rendered in the authorized version, "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end," but the full meaning of the text is this: "He hath set eternity in their heart."

The wise man has been reasoning about the matters of life and has declared that "to every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose . . ." (Ecclesiastes 3:1). There is a time for life and for death, for joy and for sorrow, for planting and for reaping. What a weary round! Is this all purposeless? Quite definitely the wise man decides it is not. There is a purpose in it all, for God "hath made every thing beautiful in his time," and each in its proper season has its own peculiar beauty of purpose. But the constant changing of life, of seasons and of circumstances is emphasized. All life is variable. All around is change and decay, but in man's heart God has set eternity.

God has set within each man a longing for immortality, a hunger for eternal life, a desire to live when this earthly house of this tabernacle is "dissolved" (2 Corinthians 5:1). Animals find the end and purpose of their lives in this world, but in the heart of man God sets eternity! That is why no man can be fully satisfied with the gratification of the desires of the flesh. Jesus Christ describes the rich man with his barns full, who said to his soul: "Soul . . . eat." It cannot be done.

The soul cannot feed upon the store of grain in the granary. This feeds the body, but in the heart eternity is hid and only that which is eternal can satisfy its hunger. What then is the answer?

Augustine had it when he said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and the heart never resteth till it findeth rest in Thee."

While, with ceaseless course, the sun Hasted through the former years,

Many souls their race have run, Nevermore to meet us here:

Fixed in an eternal state, They have done with all below;

We a little longer wait, But how little, none can know.

As the winged arrow flies Speedily the mark to find;

As the lightning from the skies Darts, and leaves no trace behind;

Swiftly thus our fleeting days Bear us down life's rapid stream;

Upward, Lord, our spirits raise;

All below is but a dream.

Thanks for mercies past received;

Pardon of our sins renew;

Teach us henceforth how to live With eternity in view:

Bless Thy word to young and old;

Fill us with a Saviour's love;

And when life's short tale is told, May we dwell with Thee above.

-John Newton

* * * GOD'S HANDIWORK

"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handywork" (Psalms 19:1).

The whole creation praises God, for He it is who created all things.

Everything that was made was made for His honor and for His praise.

- He is the One who hung the world on nothing and the North on empty space.

- He is the God who reared the battlements of the hills against the sky

- He is the One who hangs the pink curtain of the dawn in the East.

- He is the One who set the music in the throat of the nightingale to make beautiful the springtime.

- He is the One who sends the rain to wash the earth, to kiss the flowers and to anoint the green things with freshness.

- He is the God who drives the chariot of the sun across the heavens.

- He is the One who spreads the velvet night like a dark cloak about the sleeping form of a weary earth.

- He is the God who sends dewdrops like tears of joy on the face of the morning.

- He is the One who established the deep places of the seas and who covered those hollows with the garment of water.

- He is the One who knows the treasures of the deep.

- He is the God who said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

- He is the God who commanded: "Let the dry land appear."

- He is the God who makes the green things burst through the sod and push into the sunlight seeking His face who is the God of heaven.

- He is the Lord of all creation!

There was one purpose in your coming into the world, and that was to glorify God. When He made you, He framed the foundation of bone. He fixed the joints and the marrow; He put the muscles there and gave you a brain to control the use of the muscles through the system of the nerves.

He gave you power to think and eyes to see and lips to praise Him and the powers of the senses to contact the world around you. "What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason,"

There is no greater evidence of the power and of the existence of God than your own mortal body.

Those evening clouds, that setting ray,

And beauteous tints, serve to display

Their great Creator's praise;

Then let the short-lived thing call'd man,

Whose life's comprised within a span,

To Him his homage raise.

We often praise the evening clouds, And tints so gay and bold,

But seldom think upon our God, Who tinged these clouds with gold.

- Sir Walter Scott

* * *

TIME, PLEASE!

Here is a story which is humorous and at the same time points a moral worth considering.

At almost the same hour each day a man's voice would ask the telephone operator in a little New England town for the exact time. Day in and day out this went on. Finally, at the end of two years, unable to contain her curiosity any longer, the operator inquired, "Would you mind telling me why you call here every morning to ask the correct time?"

"Why, certainly," the man's voice answered; "I blow the town whistle at noon, and I want to be sure that my clock is right."

"That is strange," the operator replied. "For the last two years I have set my clock every day by the town whistle."

That is what I call getting in a rut! But theirs was the sort of rut a merry-go-round would make if it had wheels- around and around and around.

To get the right time, one must go to an observatory clock. The observatory gets time from the stars; and to be absolutely correct, a clock must be set by this celestial time. God's clock, the heavenly bodies, never gains or loses one second. Every timepiece which man has ever invented is fallible and variable, it is to be kept accurate, its time must be checked by the stars.

So it is with all things which man can devise. Social institutions, customs, morals, laws, governments-all these, if based wholly on man's conceptions or on some other man-made institution, custom, moral, law or government, are quite as apt as not to be wrong. All human institutions and human concepts must, if they have value, be checked against the eternal verities of God's Truth. The Bible gives us the divine standard.

As the time kept by the heavenly bodies is the only safe and accurate standard by which men's clocks may be set, so is this Book the only unchanging and eternal standard by which institutions and customs may be measured. Principles of right and wrong are unchanging. That which was true five thousand years ago is true today. Men's ideas of truth may change. Man's standards may vary from generation to generation, but God's Word is forever fixed in heaven. Only that concept or that institution which is based upon the truths revealed in the Word of God can make claim to Truth.

Jesus, my Truth, my Way, My sure, unerring Light, On Thee my feeble steps I stay, Which Thou wilt guide aright.

My Wisdom and my Guide, My Counselor Thou art;

O never let me leave Thy side, Or from Thy paths depart!

Teach me the happy art In all things to depend On Thee;

O never, Lord, depart, But love me to the end!

- Charles Wesley

* * *

ALL INSPIRED

Rather frequently you hear someone say, "I believe in the teachings of Jesus, but I cannot accept the inspiration of the Old Testament. I believe in the sort of life which Jesus lived and in God as He revealed Him, but I cannot believe in the cruel God of the Old Testament. The New Testament I will accept, but I cannot accept the Old."

Actually, the man who makes this statement knows very little about God at all. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New is one God. Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, God incarnate in the flesh, is Himself the Creator of the universe; for we are told that: "all things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). He declares: "I and my Father are One" (John 10:30); "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). He identifies Himself very clearly with the Eternal God, the God of both the Old and the New Testament, when He declares: "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

God is eternal and unchanging: "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He is a God of infinite majesty, infinite justice, infinite purity and infinite love.

A parent may manifest his love for a child in discipline and restraint and punishment as definitely as he does by caress and affection and tender speeches. In the Old Testament, God gives men laws which are as much an evidence of His love for men as the grace which He manifests in the death of the Lord Jesus in the New.

Suppose a father, knowing that a river is turbulent and dangerous and full of whirlpools, says to his son, "You must not swim here." He forbids his son to swim in the river, because he knows the dangers that are there; but when the son, disobedient to his father's commands, swims anyway and is sucked down by the whirlpool and is at the point of drowning, the father leaps in and at the

risk of his own life saves his son. So God establishes in the Old Testament His law for the good of the creatures which He has made; but when they, disobedient, violate His law and are thereby lost and undone, He comes in the Person of the Saviour, that on the Cross He may rescue them from death and sin.

No, there is no difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New. He is One. The man who says, "I don't accept the God of the Old Testament, but I believe in the God of Jesus," shows that he knows nothing at all about either Jesus Christ or His Father.

Our Lord Himself said this of those who refused to accept the words of Moses in the Old Testament: "If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:47). The man who rejects Moses' testimony of God cannot accept the revelation of God in Christ Jesus, for Christ is the God about whom Moses wrote.

O how I fear Thee, living God, With deepest, tenderest fears,
And worship Thee with trembling hope, And penitential tears.
Yet I may love Thee, too, O Lord, Almighty as Thou art;
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me The love of my poor heart.
No earthly father loves like Thee, No mother half so mild
Bears and forbears, as Thou hast done With me, Thy sinful child.
Father of Jesus, love's reward!
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie, And gaze and gaze on Thee!
- Frederick W. Faber

02.02. Truly This Was The Son of God

“Truly This Was The Son of God”

INFINITE LOVE

CHAPTER TWO No man can question the deity of Christ without at the same time questioning His goodness. Christ cannot be a good man unless indeed He is God, for He claimed over and over again to be God. No mere man can make such a statement and be a good man. Either He is God or He is a fraud and a liar and an impostor.

One day as He sat on a well curb and talked to the woman of Samaria about the Messiah who should come, He said: “I that speak unto thee am he” (John 4:25-26). Another place He states: “He [Moses] wrote of me” (John 5:46). The context shows that He meant that Moses wrote of Him as the God of eternity and the God who should be revealed. He declares: “I am the Bread which came down from heaven” (John 6:41). No man who was only a man could make such a claim. As to His person and origin, He makes clear declaration when He says: “I proceeded forth and came from God” (John 8:42).

He was not created; He was the Creator. The first chapter of John tells us that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” That He Himself is the Eternal One, He affirms when he states, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

On one occasion He asked the question: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” The one to whom the question was addressed replied: “Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?” Firmly setting forth His deity “Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee” (John 9:35-37). That He permitted Himself to be worshipped as God is a fact worthy of our notice. On this occasion, we are told that the one to whom He spoke worshipped Him.

It was because of His claims of deity that He was crucified. John 5:18 tells us: “The Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” On the occasion of His trial, the high priest asked Him, “Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” And He answered, “Thou hast said.” By that, He means, “As thou sayest, I am.”

Thus we see that many times by direct statements of His own claim, as well as by accepting worship as God, He laid claims to deity. Certainly His life manifested the truth of His claim.

- He did miracles which only God could perform.
- He lived a life which was completely without sin.
- He foretold future events which were locked in the knowledge of God.
- He applied Old Testament Scriptures, particularly the prophecies, to Himself.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, for He can do for poor sinners what only God can do-cleanse them from their sin, give them power to live lives of victory and assure them of eternal happiness with Him. And can it be that I should gain An interest in the Saviour's blood?

Died He for me, who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?

Amazing love! how can it be

That Thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me?

He left His Father's throne above, So free, so infinite His grace!

Emptied Himself of all but love, And bled for Adam's helpless race;

'Tis mercy all, immense and free

For, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night;

Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light:

My chains fell off, my heart was free,

I rose, went forth and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread, Jesus, with all in Him, is mine;

Alive in Him, my living Head, And clothed in righteousness divine,

Bold I approach the eternal throne,

And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

-Charles Wesley

* * * THE VIRGIN BIRTH No doctrine of Scripture has been more often attacked than the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of our Lord. Even men who profess to be Christians are guilty of saying that belief in the Virgin Birth is a nonessential matter. Some say the doctrine is of no importance because the Virgin Birth of Christ is only mentioned by two of the Gospel writers. It is not necessary for God to include something in the record over and over again to make it true and valid.

One statement from the Word of God should be enough, but God gives us these two in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Neither Mark nor John deny the Virgin Birth, nor say anything contrary to the record set forth by Matthew and Luke.

However, the Virgin Birth of Christ is prophesied in the Old Testament, as well as recorded in two of the Gospels. The prophet Isaiah said: "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14).

The Lord Jesus Christ must be Virgin Born or He is not the Messiah looked for by Israel and prophesied by Isaiah. His miraculous birth, Isaiah tells us, shall be a sign of His person. Had the Jews of His day admitted His Virgin Birth they would of necessity have had to accept Him as the

Messiah.

It is difficult to understand why men have any trouble accepting this doctrine. Everything about the life of Jesus Christ is miraculous. A rabbi once said to a Christian minister, "If a woman should make the same claims about the birth of her son as the Bible makes in regard to the birth of Jesus Christ, would you believe her?"

The preacher replied, "If that son were a Jesus Christ, I would believe her."

In his essay of the Virgin Birth, William Jennings Bryan said: "The birth of Jesus Christ is no more miraculous than the birth of each one of us. It is simply different. The God who gives life can give it in any way that pleases Him."

If the Bible is the Word of God, then it must set forth the truth. The Book states positively and definitely that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin. You must accept the Virgin Birth or you reject the veracity of the Book. Our souls shall magnify the Lord,

In God the Saviour we rejoice;

While we repeat the Virgin's song,

May the same spirit tune our voice.

The Highest saw her low estate,

And mighty things His hand hath done;

His overshadowing power and grace

Makes her the mother of His Son.

He spake to Abra'm and his seed, "In thee shall all . . . the earth be bless'd;" The memory of that ancient word Lay long in His eternal breast.

But now no more shall Israel wait,

No more the Gentiles lie forlorn:

Lo, the desire of nations comes,

Behold the promis'd seed is born!

- Isaac Watts

* * * FROM THE REALMS OF GLORY The Lord Jesus Christ, co-existent with the Father from the beginning, the One who John tells us was in the beginning with God, voluntarily took upon Himself the form of man that He might redeem man and reconcile him unto God. What great condescension to step from the realm of glory which had been eternally His into the tempest and turmoil of time! What condescension for God Himself, whose habitation is the universe, to robe Himself with the garment of flesh and the graveclothes of humanity! Of His own will He came, eagerly, gladly, unselfishly to die. Paul tells us that He, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame . . ." and that it was for the death of the Cross that He became incarnate.

Christ was incarnate for a definite purpose. He came to die. Man had sinned, and man was under condemnation. The human race had transgressed the righteous Law of God and the sons of the race must be punished. No man could pay the penalty for the sins of man because no man was himself free from the condemnation of sin; but God Himself, the sinless One, in the person of His Son, incarnate in the flesh, paid the penalty for the sins of men. "For this cause," said He, speaking of His dead, "came I into the world." God did not become man to teach men how to live. Christ did not come into the world primarily to perform miracles, to restore sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, to send strength coursing through withered limbs. The miracles which He performed were indications of His deity, the proofs of His power. They were the flowers which blossomed in His footprints as He journeyed toward the Cross.

In the Lord Jesus Christ the power and the love of God ally themselves in satisfying His Law and in making divine mercy available for man through His Atonement upon the Cross for the sins of Adam's children.

Plunged in a gulf of dark despair,
We wretched sinners lay,
Without one cheering beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.
With pitying eyes the Prince of grace
Beheld our helpless grief:
He saw, and, O amazing love!
He ran to our relief.
Down from the shining seats above
With joyful haste He sped,
Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead.
O for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues,
The Saviour's praises speak!
Angels, assist our mighty joys,
Strike all your harps of gold;
But when you raise your highest notes,
His love can ne'er be told.

-Isaac Watts

* * *

MYSTERY DIVINE When God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ was incarnate among men, it was a complete identification of the deity and humanity: God in Christ became man, in all points like unto man, except that He only of all the sons of man was completely free from sin.

The Lord of glory became a child of earth. How great a mystery!

- The tiny Babe lying in the manger of Bethlehem was the One without whom “was not any thing made that was made.”

- The tiny, chubby hand upon the cheek of the Virgin Mother was the hand of Him who holds the universe in the hollow of His hand.

- The baby arm about the mother’s neck was the arm of the One whose everlasting arms are underneath all things.

- The lisping words of the toddling Child of Nazareth were the words of the One who spoke the earth into being and who created a universe by the word of His mouth.

- The knowledge of the twelve-year-old Lad in the Temple as He confounded and amazed the doctors of the law was the knowledge of the One who is the Author of all truth and the embodiment of all wisdom.

- The One sitting on the well curb to rest, tired with His journey and burning with the heat of the day, was the God who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh.

- The One who paid taxes to Caesar was the One who established human government and from whose hand Caesar received the power he so often misused.

The whole wonder of the incarnation is this: it was for us, for you and for me, that God became flesh and dwelt among us. The personal application of His shed blood to our sinful hearts cleanses us; faith in Him imparts salvation to us. How wonderful that God should take upon Himself the form of man, become an inheritor of the “ills that flesh is heir to,” suffer the ignominy of the Cross! but how much more wonderful that He did this for us!

Hark, the glad sound! the Saviour comes, The Saviour promised long;

Let every heart prepare a throne, And every voice a song.

He comes, the prisoner to release, In Satan’s bondage held;

The gates of brass before Him burst, The iron fetters yield.

He comes, the broken heart to bind, The wounded soul to cure, And, with the treasures of His grace,

To enrich the humble poor.

Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace, Thy welcome shall proclaim;

And heaven's eternal arches ring With Thy beloved name.

- Philip Doddridge

GOD WITH MAN The heart of the Christian doctrine is the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ-that He who is God became man; that He who was from the beginning the Creator of all things became flesh and dwelt among us. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, His death on the Cross could have no atoning value, because He then is just a man born in sin like other men. But He is not just a man; He is the Son of God.

- The Infant, dependent upon the tender care of a mother, is the God who gave to the sun the power to draw water from the sea; and from Him the moon derives its power over the tides of the oceans.

- The little Lad toddling about the carpenter shop at Nazareth and playing in the sawdust on the floor is the God who stood at the head of creation.

- The Child who holds in His hands curling wood shavings from Joseph's workbench is the God who created the elements from which the wood is made.

- The little Boy just learning to talk and lisping His first baby words is the God who created all things by the Word of His power, who said, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:3).

- The Child who grows "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52) is the very One who made man in His own image and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.

God became man.

- Hungry, He breaks off the grain as He passes through the fields; but He is nonetheless the God who hid the life within the seed and established the law of growth and the season of the harvest.

- Weary and thirsty, He asks drink from a woman of Samaria; but He is nonetheless the God who stores the waters in the hillsides and causes every river to flow down the valleys.

He entered into all the fellowship of human suffering and sorrow.

- Shedding His tears before the grave of Lazarus, He is nonetheless the God who can bid the dead come forth and restore the brother to the weeping sisters.

He, the Eternal God, "is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalms 46:1). He, the incarnate God, having been tempted "yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15), is able to succor them who are tempted.

Thou didst leave Thy throne and Thy kingly crown, When Thou camest to earth for me;

But in Bethlehem's home there was found no room For Thy holy nativity.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!

There is room in my heart for Thee.

The foxes found rest, and the birds their nest In the shade of the forest tree;

But Thy couch was the sod, O Thou Son of God, In the deserts of Galilee.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!

There is room in my heart for Thee.

Thou camest, O Lord, with the living Word, That should set Thy people free;

But with mocking scorn, and with crown of thorn, They bore Thee to Calvary.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!

Thy Cross is my only plea.

When heaven's arches ring, and her choirs shall sing At Thy coming to victory,

Let Thy voice call me home, saying, "Yet there is room, There is room at My side for thee."

And my heart shall rejoice, Lord Jesus, When Thou comest and callest for me.

- Emily E. S. Elliott A RELIGION'S TEST

God never commands us to do something without making it clear how it is to be done and without giving us strength to do it. We are told to "resist the devil" (James 4:7); but that we may not be left in any doubt as to how we are to fight against him, God tells us in another place: "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Corinthians 10:4), indicating that it is not in our own physical strength or powers of will that we defeat him.

The Lord Jesus sets us the example of how to meet Satan when He defeats him with the Word of God as He resists:

- The temptation to turn stones into bread by saying, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4);

- The temptation to cast Himself down from the Temple by saying, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7);

- The temptation to bow the knee to Satan and receive all the dominion of the world by saying, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10).

Elsewhere, God tells us to "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Certainly this command is needed in our day when on every hand are heard the clamoring voices of false cults and all sorts of religious systems and "isms" and when many are led astray by Satan through them. "How may I test the spirits?" many are asking. "How may I know whether a religion is true or false?" The answer is found in 1 John 4:2-3 : "Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."

This verse means simply this: It is not enough to admit that there was a Man named Jesus who at one time lived on the earth, who was a great Teacher and a great Miracle worker. Almost all

religious systems admit the fact of Jesus, the unusual and good Man. On the basis of history, they must; but the test of a religious system is this: Does it admit that Jesus is the Christ? That is to say, does it admit that He is the Son of God, the Incarnate One, God come in the flesh, the Only Begotten Son of God, Lord, Saviour, Redeemer? If there is any uncertainty in the position of any cult or sort of religion on this great central fact, it is not of God.

“Try the spirits;” that is, test them. Test them by this standard: Do they recognize the deity of the Lord Jesus and His identity as the Living God?

O never star

Was lost; here We all aspire to heaven and there is heaven

Above us. If I stoop Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud, It is but for a time; I press God’s lamp
Close to my breast; its splendor soon or late Will pierce the gloom. I shall emerge some day.

- Robert Browning

* * * LIGHT OF THE WORLD With godlike simplicity Jesus Christ asserted His deity. “I am the Light of the world.” “I am the Bread which came down from Heaven.” “I and my Father are One,” said He.

Beside the well of Samaria He revealed to the woman of Sychar that He was the looked-for Messiah, saying, “I that speak unto thee am he.” He associated Himself with the God of eternity when He used the name of the great “I AM,” saying of Himself: “Before Abraham was, I am.”

As God, He forgave sins and demonstrated His right to assume the divine prerogative of healing the body, saying: “For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?” From the Cross in the hour of His anguish He spoke forgiveness to a dying thief and opened the door of Paradise for the poor malefactor suffering beside Him.

His Deity was so evidenced even in His death in the rending of the veil of the Temple, the earthquake and darkness, that the centurion in charge of the Crucifixion was compelled to exclaim, “Truly this was the Son of God.”

What of His Resurrection? So powerful was He that death could not hold Him; so divine that He could take up again the life which He had laid down willingly and return victorious over the power of death and the tomb. The grave clothes lying in their place, the stone rolled back evidence but another time the deity manifest in the life of Jesus Christ from the moment the Babe was laid in Bethlehem’s manger.

His power in the lives of those who have acknowledged His deity and have been redeemed by His blood is proof that He must indeed be the Son of God. A great host-they testify that He has done for them what only God’s Son could do. A great cloud of witnesses, “a noble army: men and boys, the matron and the maid” in every century since He appeared upon our earth have trusted Him and proved Him God.

By His divine power drunkards have been made sober, unclean men pure, thieves honest. By His divine grace lives are transformed. He is the Son of God! With cheerful voice I sing

The titles of my Lord,
And borrow all the names
Of honor from His Word:
Nature and art Can ne'er supply
Sufficient forms Of majesty.
The sovereign King of kings,
The Lord of lords most high,
Writes His own Name upon
His garment and His thigh: His name is call'd
The Word of God;
He rules the earth
With iron rod.
But when for works of peace
The great Redeemer comes,
What gentle characters,
What titles He assumes?
Light of the world, The Life of men; Nor will He bear Those Names in vain.
Immense compassion reigns
In our Immanuel's heart,
When He descends to act
A Mediator's part:
He is a Friend And Brother too;
Divinely kind,
Divinely true.
-Isaac Watts

* * * DIVINE PERSONALITY

Christ drew men by the force of His divine personality. He called the disciples and they came without question, forsaking all to follow Him. Little children toddled from the shelter of their mothers' garments and clambered from their nurses' arms to crowd about Him and wicked sinners looking into His face recognized a friend.

He drew by the wisdom of His words. The doctors of religion gathered in rapt attention about the Lad of twelve in the Temple. Nicodemus brought his perplexities and spiritual problems to the light of the wisdom of the Son of Man. Crowds thronged to Him, drawn by the miracles which He performed. They came-some to be healed, some to be fed, some hungry for the truth which fell from His lips, some driven by curiosity, eager to behold the sensational and unusual.

On the occasion of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the reason for the enthusiasm of the populace is plainly set down. Those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus had naturally spread abroad the story. "For this cause the people also met him, for that they had heard that he had done this miracle."

So great was the throng about Him that the problem was often how to get near Him. One poor bedridden man was lowered through the roof to find healing at His feet. They came with all manner of disease, halt and deaf and blind. On one occasion ten lepers came at once, crying for healing to the Son of God, but no one who came in faith ever went away with the need unmet.

It is not primarily by the power of His personality, the wisdom of His words, or the miracles which He performed that He has drawn men to Him through the centuries. It is rather by the majesty of His suffering and death. It is Christ lifted up on the Cross that pulls men to Him. But as the eternal Lord of Glory, all men, even His enemies, shall perforce be drawn to Him-for He shall sit as the Judge before whose face those who now reject His love shall stand when He shall come in power and majesty.

Storms could not rage and tempest dared not tell Fury that demons know, when He was there;

Waves, wild and unbridled, heard and fell Crouching in meek obeisance; everywhere

He walked those of great faith were healed, and rest Flowed from His spirit to the weary one;

They who believed and followed were but blessed, Brought to the Father's presence by the Son.

Is this the price required by men for love,

Compassion to a world steeped in its sin-

Betrayal? Agony within a grove?

And shame and suffering above the din

Of multitudes upon a darkened hill?

O shadowed cross, I see thee lying still

Upon the world; the scorner stumbles there . . .

Another kneels . . . and as the tossing wave

On Galilee was stilled, peace follows prayer.

"Never man spake as this man"-now forgave.

-Ruth Gibbs

* * * WONDERFULLY STRANGE A group of Pharisees and scribes came one day to see Jesus. They did not come out of a friendly interest or even from simple curiosity. These men were His enemies. They came to see for themselves whether the wonderful reports of His power were true. They came in hatred to criticize and find fault, but when the day was over they exclaimed, "We have seen strange things to day" (Luke 5:26).

They saw a man sick of the palsy let down on his bed through the roof to the feet of Jesus and heard Him say: "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee." Strange words these, but even stranger that which happened next. Jesus read their minds. They were thinking, This is blasphemy for a man to say that he forgives sin. Nobody can forgive sin but God. Jesus Christ, who is God, the God who looks not on the outward appearance but on the heart, told them what they were thinking. Then to prove His right to forgive sin, which is a sickness of the soul, He healed the sickness of the body, and the palsied man took up his bed and went away healed.

The Pharisees and scribes saw strange things the day they spent with Jesus, but men who spend time with Him always see strange things. Everything about Him is unusual.

- It was a strange thing that Jesus Christ should die for our sins, the Just for the unjust.

- It is a strange thing that He who is the Lord of life became subject unto death and laid down His life.

The disciples and the women saw strange things the day they came to the sepulcher and found the dead Man risen and the tomb empty. Everything about the Lord Jesus Christ is strange and wonderful.

- It is strange that He can take a poor sinner and make him a child of God-that He can change lives. Strange, but true!

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
And publish abroad His wonderful Name;
The Name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
His kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.
God ruleth on high, almighty to save;
And still He is nigh; His presence we have:
The great congregation His triumph shall sing,
Ascribing salvation to Jesus, our King.
"Salvation to God, who sits on the throne,"
Let all cry aloud, and honor the Son:
The praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
Fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give Him His right,
All glory and power, all wisdom and might,
All honor and blessing, with angels above,
And thanks never ceasing for infinite love.

- Charles Wesley

* * *

ALL IN ALL

“God is Love” (1 John 4:8). The Lord Jesus Christ by His death manifested God’s love to man. He who was God in the flesh demonstrated the love of the Father in the price of His own blood paid for man’s redemption. “But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).

God is Wisdom and the Author of all wisdom (Daniel 2:20). The Lord Jesus Christ spoke only words of divine wisdom. “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46).

God is Truth (Psalms 100:5). The Son of God never uttered one word untrue, and He Himself was Truth incarnate. “I am . . . the truth” (John 14:6), said He.

God is Life and the Author of life (Genesis 2:7). Christ said: “I am come that they might have life . . .” (John 10:10) and: “I am . . . the life” (John 14:6). The dead were restored to life at His command.

God is Light (1 John 1:5). In the Ark of the Covenant in ancient Israel God’s presence was manifested by the radiance called the Shekinah glory. Jesus brought the light of heaven into the darkness of the world of sin. He is the “true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9). The brightness of His presence dispels the darkness in the lives of men.

God is Power (Psalms 62:11). The flash of lightning and the roar of the thunder speak of God’s omnipotence. All the forces locked in the universe came from God. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated deity in the power of His very words.

- He commanded the winds to cease and the waves to be still, and they obeyed Him (Matthew 8:27).

- He had power over disease, power to break the bonds of death and loose the stony portals of the tomb.

God is Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). Christ manifested perfect righteousness in every word and every act. Of all the sons of men He only was completely free from sin, without spot or blemish. No stain of guilt marred His life.

God is Eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27). The Bible opens with the statement: “In the beginning God . . .” The inspired Psalmist exclaims: “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalms 90:2). Jesus Christ is the eternal God come in the flesh. He “was in the beginning . . .” (John 1:2). He is “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). Christ said: “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58).

How true the words: "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,

Whom we, that have not seen Thy face,

By faith, and faith alone, embrace, Believing where we cannot prove;

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:

Thou madest man, he knows not why,

He thinks he was not made to die: And Thou hast made him: Thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,

The highest, holiest manhood, Thou:

Our wills are ours, we know not how; Our wills are ours, to make them Thine.

Our little systems have their day;

They have their day and cease to be:

They are but broken lights of Thee,

And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.

- Alfred Tennyson

* * * NONE GOOD BUT ONE A rich and apparently prominent young Jew came to Jesus with a question involving the most important matter with which any man is faced: the matter of eternal life.

He came to the right One. He stood before the Lord of Life Himself, before incarnate deity, before the One who is the Giver of all life; but he recognized Him only as a teacher. "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus Christ for the moment ignored the question to challenge the salutation. "Why callest thou me good?" said He. "There is none good but one, that is, God."

Our Lord here implied, "You greet me as a good teacher, nothing more. I cannot be a good teacher unless I am God." Over and over again He claimed to be God. He identified Himself with the great God of the Ages when He used the unspeakable name of the great I Am, saying, "Before Abraham was, I Am" (John 8:58). On trial before the great High Priest on the charge of blasphemy for making Himself equal with God, He was asked: "Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God," and He replied: "Thou hast said."

If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, He is an, impostor, a fraud and a liar. He must be God or He is not a good man, for He claimed to be God, and no good man would make such a claim unless He were more than man-unless He were God.

Any man is illogical in his thinking who says, "I believe that Jesus was a good man, but I do not believe that He was God."

By reason of His deity Jesus Christ demands our worship, or because of His falsehood and dishonesty, deserves our contempt.

Ere the blue heavens were stretch'd abroad

From everlasting was the Word:

With God He was; the Word was God,

And must divinely be ador'd.

By His own power were all things made;

By Him supported all things stand;

He is the whole creation's Head,

And angels fly at His command.

But lo, He leaves those heavenly forms,

The Word descends and dwells in clay,

That He may hold converse with worms,

Drest in such feeble flesh as they.

Mortals with joy beheld His face,

Th' eternal Father's only Son;

How full of truth! how full of grace!

When thro' His eyes the Godhead shone!

- Isaac Watts

* * * PALMS OF VICTORY The King of Glory entered the gates of Jerusalem riding upon the foal of an ass. Before Him the populace laid their garments in the way and with the waving of palm branches and with shouts of hosannas, they welcomed Him into the city of David. The Pharisees, jealous and fearful of His power over the people, beholding the scene, said among themselves, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him" (John 12:19). Crowds thronged to Him, drawn by the miracles which He performed. A woman who had suffered much at the hands of physicians and whose illness was still uncured touched Him for healing as He moved through the streets of a city with the throngs surging about Him. The touch of faith brought health flowing into her through the hem of His garment. He drew by the wisdom of His words. He drew them by the force of His divine personality. Strange, sad sights the crowds must have presented. They came; and there is no record that any having faith went away with need unmet.

But, Christ, who drew the crowd, lost the crowd. He spoke of a Cross, of suffering and death. Some who had followed for loaves and fishes had no desire to drink of that cup or eat of that Bread. They came to take blessing and healing from His touch, but shrank from the curse of the Cross. It has ever been so. Down the years there have been many who professed themselves

followers of Christ when there was something to be gained by a connection with His Church and an association with His Name but whose profession was retracted and whose devotion failed when persecution raged and the enemies of Christ were in power. But the crowd will be regained.

- Because He “endured the cross, despising the shame . . .” the kingdom shall be His.

- Because He suffered, He shall reign.

- Because He as a sheep before the shearers was dumb and opened not His mouth, every tongue shall confess that Christ is Lord.

He draws them now, not the multitudes, but some hungry-hearted, needy ones, some who are willing to walk a narrow way and bear the shame of His Cross. He draws them, some out of every “kindred, and tongue . . . and nation;” but the day is coming when all the hosts of men shall acclaim Him, when the words which His enemies, the Pharisees, spoke in bitterness that day amid the swelling hosannas shall have become truth:

“Behold, the world is gone after Him!”

Hark! the sound of holy voices, Chanting at the crystal sea,

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Alleluia! Lord, to Thee!

Multitude which none can number, Like the stars in glory stands,

Clothed in white apparel, holding Palms of victory in their hands.

Patriarch, and holy prophet Who prepared the way for Christ,

King, apostle, saint, confessor, Martyr, and evangelist;

Saintly maiden, godly matron, Widows who have watched to prayer,

Joined in holy concert, singing To the Lord of all, are there.

Marching with Thy Cross, their banner,

They have triumphed, following Thee, the Captain of salvation,

Thee, their Saviour and their King.

Gladly, Lord, with Thee they suffered;

Gladly, Lord, with Thee they died;

And by death to life immortal

They were born and glorified.

Now they reign in heavenly glory, Now they walk in golden Light,

Now they drink, as from a river, Holy bliss and infinite:

Love and peace they taste forever, And all truth and knowledge see

In the beatific vision Of the blessed Trinity.

-Christopher Wordsworth

* * * WITH THE FATHER

Jesus Christ was not rejected and crucified because He was a good man. He was good-the only perfect Man who has ever appeared on the face of the earth, the only sinless One who has ever walked across the stage of history. The perfection and wonder of His life was a constant rebuke to those who lived for sin and self. Good men have often been misunderstood; they have been ostracized by society; they have even been martyred.

But Jesus Christ was not put to death because He was perfect and sinless. He was sent to the Cross because He was God. It was on the basis of His claims of deity that He was tried.

"Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God," the High Priest asked Him. He answered, "Thou hast said," which in the idiom that He used is a declaration of the truth of the statement. It meant, "As thou sayest, I am."

When He hung on the Cross, they mocked Him, saying: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him" (Matthew 27:40; Matthew 27:42). The very fact that this shout echoed so loudly atop Calvary that day emphasizes the reason for His death.

Deity, by reason of itself, demands obedience and worship. Men hated and rejected the Son of God because His claims meant a sacrifice of their own wills and abandonment of their own selfish interests-a complete obedience to the demands of His Word and a full acceptance of the Truth which He taught. Because they were interested in themselves, because they wanted their own way, because they preferred to cling to their own sins, they rejected His claims; and in their hatred of the claims of deity, they desired His death and clamored for His blood.

If Jesus Christ be the Son of God, He has a right still to the obedience of men's hearts and the surrender of their lives to His service. Those in our day who deny His deity do so because they resent the claims of Jesus Christ upon them and His demands upon the creatures whom He has made. John begins his Gospel with this statement: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-2; John 1:14).

Still in this twentieth century, He stands, full of grace and truth, very God of very God, and yet men in their sin and willfulness reject His claims of deity because they are not willing to bow the knee to Him.

O Love divine, what hast Thou done! The incarnate God hath died for me!

The Father's co-eternal Son Bore all my sins upon the tree!

The Son of God for me hath died: My Lord, my Love, is crucified.

Behold Him, all ye that pass by, The bleeding Prince of life and peace!

Come, sinners, see your Saviour die,
And say, was ever grief like His?
Come, feel with me His blood applied:
My Lord, my Love, is crucified:
Is crucified for me and you, To bring us rebels back to God:
Believe, believe the record true,
Ye all are bought with Jesus' blood:
Pardon for all flows from His side:
My Lord, my Love, is crucified.
Then let us sit beneath His Cross,
And gladly catch the healing stream;
All things for Him account but loss,
And give up all our hearts to Him: Of nothing think or speak beside:
My Lord, my Love, is crucified.

- Charles Wesley

* * * BEAUTY FOR ASHES In ancient oriental lands when sorrow came, a man clothed himself in sackcloth, sat down in the dust, threw ashes upon his head and mourned aloud. Job grieved in just this fashion for his children who had been killed.

Today the world is wrapped in sorrow. Hearts are heavy. In Western lands sorrowing women in widows' weeds and heavy-hearted men with bands of crepe upon their sleeves are mourning amid the dust and ashes of wrecked cities. In our own land, which has been spared the physical destruction of battle and the marks of bombing, there are some whose hearts feel dusty with grief and who in their sorrow find food like ashes to the taste. Sad world!

But there is promise of a change. Isaiah foresaw it over 2500 years ago. Looking down the ages he beheld a new dispensation when the Prince of Peace shall have come to bring peace and joy to the earth. The attitude of men's hearts is richly described in oriental symbolism: "Beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isaiah 61:3). There are no disheveled mourners defiled with ashes. There is no dust, but beauty. There are no mourning robes. There are no cries of sorrow. Dressed in garments of worship, men and women are singing hymns of praise. Perfumed oil, the symbol of happiness and joy and festivity, has been poured upon their heads.

Such is the picture which Isaiah draws of the world wherein Christ reigns, a world in which the very dust of the desert has become the rich soil of a garden in full bloom. Men come and go in peace, and all creation seems to sing with joy.

Above the dissonance of Time, And discord of its angry words,
I hear the everlasting chime, The music of unjarring chords.
I bid it welcome; and my haste
To join it cannot brook delay;- O song of morning, come at last,
And ye who sing it, come away!
O song of light, and dawn and bliss,
Sound over earth, and fill these skies, Nor ever, ever, ever cease
Thy soul-entrancing melodies!
Glad song of this disburdened earth,
Which holy voices then shall sing:
Praise for Creation's second birth
And glory to Creation's King!

- Horatius Bonar

* * *

02.03. All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray

“All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray”

DISEASED WITHIN

CHAPTER THREE

How easy and how human it is to blame everyone and everything except ourselves for our sins and shortcomings! We are so prone, when we yield to temptation, to blame the sin upon any circumstance except ourselves.

Adam, having sinned, made an excuse which all too many of his children have echoed, when he said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:12). Instead of simply confessing his sin and saying, “I am guilty. I disobeyed,” he, if we may be excused the use of a modern expression of slang, “passed the buck” to his wife.

The tendency of human nature is always to blame sin upon something outside ourselves-if not upon an individual, upon circumstances. We excuse ourselves for certain habits which are wrong by saying, “Well, I am just weak on that point. You see, I have inherited temptations along that line.” Or again, “My environment and surroundings were all against me. After all, if I had been in different circumstances or had not had to associate with certain people, I would never have done that thing.” Mothers, with the natural instinct of their heart, seldom admit that their children are bad. They say, “Well, my son is not a bad boy; but he got in the wrong company.”

While our companions and surroundings and our environment may be a contributing factor to our misdoing, we should not fail to admit that the source of sin is within ourselves. Were it not, the outward influence would have nothing upon which to work. It is the corrupt nature which is acted upon by temptations from without.

That is why God declares of the human heart that it is “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). That is why the Word is so emphatic when it states: “In my flesh, dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7:18).

The inward desire is the seed of sin. Outward circumstances act upon that seed only as nature and environment act upon the seed planted in the ground. The blossom comes because there is life in the seed, and sin develops because there is a sinful nature within.

When we try to blame “fate” or circumstances or environment, we are, without realizing it, oftentimes trying to make God Himself responsible. We are doing that which we are told in the thirteenth verse of the first chapter of James we should not do-that is, saying when we are tempted, “We are tempted of God.” “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14). Our prayer should be: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalms 51:10). When the heart is right the outward life will indicate that fact.

O for that tenderness of heart Which bows before the Lord,
Acknowledging how just Thou art, And trembling at Thy word!
O for those humble, contrite tears, Which from repentance flow:
That consciousness of guilt which fears The long-suspended blow!
Saviour, to me in pity give The sensible distress;
The pledge Thou wilt, at last, receive, And bid me die in peace.

- Charles Wesley

* * *

ALL GUILTY In these days of conflicting theories as to the relationship of men and of nations, it is worthwhile to stop and consider what God has to say. He declares, "There is no difference . . ." (Romans 10:12). He is not talking about difference in position, in intellect, in color, in creed; He is talking about difference in their standing before Him. In what is there no difference? In this, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Wealth has nothing to do with our standing here. Nationalism is not taken into account here; but all men, the most debased, primitive savage, and the most cultured and civilized American, find themselves on a plane of absolute equality here, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." In this point, all men are alike.

Are there degrees of guilt? Yes. The murderer in his cell, condemned and waiting death for a brutal crime, has certainly committed, at least as far as society is concerned, a much more grave offense than the honest, upright and respectable business man whose chief offense may be the coveting of something which belongs to another man. But while the degrees of guilt may be different, these two are equal in the fact that both are condemned; for God's Word declares that he that offends in one point is guilty in all.

We talk about inhibitions and complexes and maladjustments to avoid the Biblical word sin, and we have largely lost a consciousness of our guilt before God. No man can ever know the joys of salvation until he first recognizes his guilt before God and his need of cleansing. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13), but the man or woman who has no consciousness of guilt, no need of divine mercy, will not call upon Him.

Modern psychiatry has proved itself Satan's ally in many instances, but never more so than in its effort to discount the guilt complex; and admission of guilt must precede the cry for pardon. We are all guilty, for "all we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6); but thank God, the verse does not end there. We guilty ones may have freedom from the penalty of our guilt: "The Lord hath laid on him" that is, on Christ, "the iniquity of us all." And since "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," we can be free forever from the guilt of our sin, if we will accept Him as our Saviour who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree . . ." (1 Peter 2:24).

I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all and frees us From the accursed load:

I bring my guilt to Jesus, To wash my crimson stains
White in His blood most precious, Till not a stain remains.
I lay my wants on Jesus;
All fullness dwells in Him;
He healeth my diseases, He doth my soul redeem:
I lay my griefs on Jesus, My burdens and my cares;
He from them all releases, He all my sorrows shares.
I long to be like Jesus, Meek, loving, lowly, mild;
I long to be like Jesus, The Father's holy Child:
I long to be with Jesus Amid the heavenly throng,
To sing with saints His praises, And learn the angels' song.

- Horatius Bonar

* * * SIN'S SOURCE In the Book of Exodus God speaks to Moses out of the burning bush about His plans for Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. He gives him a sign. He says, "Put now thine hand into your bosom," and Moses put the hand in the bosom. He pulled it out and it was white with leprosy, and the Lord said to him, "Put thine hand into thy bosom again." He put it in again, and this time when he pulled it out, it was no longer leprous.

There is a significance in this sign which God gave Moses. The hand indicates the heart. What the hand does, shows what is in the heart. Leprosy in the Bible is a type of sin, sin which destroys both body and soul.

The first sign of leprosy is a lack of feeling in the part affected. That is what sin does; it deadens the conscience. Gradually the conscience stops hurting the man who practices sin. Moses put his hand in his bosom next to his heart and brought it out full of leprosy, the type of sin-sin which comes from within. All the sin in a life comes from the heart. "Out of the heart proceed . . . things which defile a man," the Lord Jesus tells us. People will see in the open acts of the life what is conceived in the secret places of the heart.

And then God said: "Put thine hand into thy bosom again."

Moses put his hand back in his bosom, and it came out whole, indicating that cleanliness from sin must also come from within. The world has never learned that. The world has tried to fix up society by cleaning up things and trying to make the outside right. We can never do that. The only way a man can get right is to be cleaned up inside.

The grace of the Lord and the blood of Christ applied to a man's heart will bring right living in the outward life. If the thoughts of the heart are clean, then the hand and the life become clean. The healing begins within and not without.

Not by applying reformation to habits and wrong doing, but by applying the cleansing blood of Christ to the heart where the root of the sin has its place, is the heart healed and the life made new.

No, not despairingly Come I to Thee;

No, not distrustingly Bend I the knee:

Sin hath gone over me,

Yet is this still my plea, Jesus hath died.

Ah! mine iniquity Crimson has been,

Infinite, infinite Sin upon sin;

Sin of not loving Thee,

Sin of not trusting Thee,

Infinite sin.

Faithful and just art Thou, Forgiving all;

Loving and kind art Thou When poor ones call:

Lord, let the cleansing blood,

Blood of the Lamb of God, Pass o'er my soul.

Then all is peace and light This soul within:

Thus shall I walk with Thee, The loved Unseen;

Leaning on Thee, my God,

Guided along the road,

Nothing between.

- Horatius Bonar

* * * **SLIME OF THE SNAIL** The Bible is full of unusual similes and striking metaphors. In Psalms 58:8, is found a most interesting figure of speech, where David, pleading with God to protect him from his wicked enemies, cries out, "As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away." Did you ever watch a snail crawl along a sidewalk leaving a slimy trail behind him and growing smaller and smaller until finally he simply disappeared, melting in his own slime? This is the thing David had in mind, and what an accurate description it is of the progress of wickedness! Many times a wicked man seems to be dissolved by his own wickedness. God's Word says, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6:8).

How often sin takes its toll physically in the consuming disease which burns out the life and destroys the body. Psychologists and physicians tell us that the base passions of hate and envy and jealousy have a definite physiological effect. The body is actually poisoned by them. Anger

can cause indigestion. An evil disposition can bring about a nervous tension which will lead to stomach ulcers or a heart attack. So evil, of itself, may bring physical destruction. The ugly, sordid instincts and impulses of a human heart may wreck health and destroy the body.

Evil works in other ways. The first little sin which seems so harmless can grow upon a man until, like a consuming fire, it destroys him. The slime in which the snail travels he secretes, and it, in turn, destroys him. So it is with sin.

When sin springs up in the human heart, the man who sets out along a pathway of evil finds himself, soul and body, destroyed by the evil one in whose way he travels.

Hate never wins its own purpose. God takes the wrath of men and makes it praise Him. He who takes the sword perishes by the sword. Men and nations are seldom destroyed from without; they destroy themselves.

The conflagrations which have consumed the nations of the past have generally sprung in spontaneous combustion from the filth and corruption hoarded within them. Like the slime, self-secreted and self-destroying, in which the snail travels, evil destroys the men who set out to work evil.

How sad our state by nature is! Our sin, how deep it stains!

And Satan binds our captive souls Fast in his slavish chains.

But there's a voice of sovereign grace

Sounds from the sacred word:

"Ho! ye despairing sinners, come,

And trust a faithful Lord."

My soul obeys the gracious call, And runs to this relief:

I would believe Thy promise, Lord, O help my unbelief!

To the blest fountain of Thy blood, Incarnate God, I fly:

Here let me wash my spotted soul From crimes of deepest dye.

A guilty, weak, and helpless worm, Into Thy arms I fall:

Be Thou my strength and righteousness, My Jesus and my all.

- Isaac Watts

* * * BUY WITHOUT MONEY

"Ye have sold yourselves for nought" (Isaiah 52:3). With these words Isaiah brings home to the people of Jerusalem the reality of their enslavement by Babylon and the fact that they have thus sold themselves into foreign servitude for nothing. They had wandered away from God, had broken His law and violated His commandments. The result of all this was bondage. In exchange for the freedom which they had enjoyed as a nation they had nothing but servitude. No price is too

high to pay for freedom. How foolish to throw away so priceless a possession and receive nothing in exchange! The man who becomes a slave to sin also sells himself for nought. We hear a great deal of talk these days about the causes of sin. Psychiatrists and sociologists like to blame everything from inhibitions and complexes to heredity and environment for human sin. While these things should not be discounted, the truth is, each man sells himself into bondage to sin. No sin is forced upon any man, in the final analysis each man is to blame for his own wrongdoing. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brethren, but we sell ourselves into slavery to sin and we gain nothing thereby except a debased nature and a guilty conscience, a lost reputation, heartaches and regrets.

Poor indeed would we be if we had to buy our own freedom from our slavery, for having gained nothing by the transaction through which we became bondmen, we have no means wherewith to purchase freedom; but those who have sold themselves, the prophet tells us, "Shall be redeemed without money."

We are freed from the slavery of sin, not by works of righteousness which we can do, but by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ who made Himself a ransom for many. God's invitation is, "He that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat" (Isaiah 55:1).

God's Word declares, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). It is our own poverty as slaves to sin which makes us candidates for the redemption for which Christ suffered, for we are "not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold . . . but by the precious blood of Christ . . ." (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,

Weak and wounded, sick and sore;

Jesus ready stands to save you,

Full of pity, love, and power:

He is able, He is willing: doubt no more.

Now, ye needy, come and welcome;

God's free bounty glorify;

True belief and true repentance, Every grace that brings you nigh,

Without money,

Come to Jesus Christ and buy.

Let not conscience make you linger, Nor of fitness fondly dream;

All the fitness He requireth Is to feel your need of Him:

This He gives you;

'Tis the Spirit's glimmering beam.

Come, ye weary, heavy laden,

Bruised and mangled by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all;
Not the righteous,
Sinners Jesus came to call.

- Joseph Hart

* * *

SIN TRIPLETS The life of Saul, the first king of Israel, is a sad and tragic spectacle. In answer to Israel's clamor for a king, Saul was chosen by God. A fine figure of a man was he, taller by a head than the average, handsome and noble of countenance. He ascended the throne to the shouts of the acclaim of the people over whom he was to rule. He was loved and respected.

No man ever began his reign more auspiciously; but note the circumstances of his death. His army routed and fleeing, the wounded king, fearing to fall into the hands of the Philistines, committed suicide. From the triumph of his ascension to the tragedy of his death, Saul had steadily descended.

- His life was wrecked by the triple sins of pride, jealousy and disobedience.
- He could not stand power.
- He became puffed up.
- He could not bear to have another man popular.
- He became jealous of David and much of his reign was spent in pursuit and attempted persecution of the man of whom he was jealous.

He disobeyed God in failing wholly to destroy all the Amalekites and their cattle when God gave him the victory over them, and in seeking to pry into the future by his visit to the Witch of Endor. As a result of these sins, his life, which might have been pleasant, became bitter; his reign, which began so gloriously, ended disastrously. His disobedience cost him God's blessing and his own life. These three sins, pride, jealousy and disobedience, all too often go together.

Like the three weird women whose evil charms lie at the root of the tragedy and ruin of Macbeth in Shakespeare's play, these three sins loom foreboding and evil in the tragedy of Saul.

They are the cause of the ruin of many lives. Saul came down to a tragic death because of these sins, but the sins did not die with him.

He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have, Little be it or much:

And, Lord, contentment still I crave, Because Thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is That go on pilgrimage:

Here little, and hereafter bliss, Is best from age to age.

- John Bunyan

* * *

JUDGMENT COMING

God has a way of turning things around. Paul was brought before Felix for trial and questioning. In the natural order of events Paul should have stood in fear before the representative of Caesar, but instead we find Felix trembling in the presence of Paul. Paul had been brought into the presence of the procurator to be questioned, but that day Felix himself was on trial.

Instead of flattering his judge, who apparently had some languid interest in oriental religion and philosophy, Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come . . ." and Felix trembled as well he might, for all three points in Paul's reasoning struck home.

Felix was a most unrighteous man. Formerly a slave, because of the emperor's affection for him, he had been appointed to this high office, where he practiced injustice of every sort. He and Drusilla, the wife of another man, whom he had taken for himself, were living lives characterized by intemperance of all kinds. He who had judged others harshly and ruthlessly and felt himself immune from the consequences of his acts was suddenly brought face to face with the fact that judgment awaited him. No wonder he trembled!

The sad part of the story is not that he trembled, but that he failed to heed the warning of his conscience as it was stirred up by the preaching of Paul and to accept the Lord Jesus Christ who is God's provision for unrighteous and in temperate men, and thus avoid the judgment to come. Felix was convicted, but not converted.

Conviction in itself is not enough. It must be followed by repentance and faith in Christ. Conviction is like the pain which warns of the presence of disease. The pain unheeded, the disease may be fatal. So, the pricking of the conscience as it is moved by the Holy Spirit should be heeded and not dismissed lightly. There is danger in putting off decision as did Felix who said:

"Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

Day of wrath, O dreadful day!

When this world shall pass away,

And the heavens together roll,

Shriveling like a parched scroll,

Long foretold by saint and sage,

David's harp, and sibyl's page.

Day of terror, day of doom,
When the Judge at last shall come!
Through the deep and silent gloom,
Shrouding every human tomb,
Shall the archangel's trumpet tone
Summon all before the throne.
O just judge, to whom belongs
Vengeance for all earthly wrongs,
Grant forgiveness, Lord, at last,
Ere the dread account be past:
Lo, my sighs, my guilt, my shame!
Spare me for Thine own great Name.
Thou, Who bad'st the sinner cease From her tears and go in peace, Thou, Who to the dying thief
Spakest pardon and relief, Thou, O Lord, to me hast given, E'en to me, the hope of heaven.

-Thomas of Celano

(Translated by Arthur P. Stanley)

* * * "THE WAY OF THE LORD"

These familiar phrases leap to our eye from the pages of the daily newspaper and the books of the philosophers and historians: "The sequence of events," "The due course of circumstances," "The natural order of things," "The dealings of fate."

Thus, men, leaving God out, attempt to account for the way in which things come to pass. The writer of the book of Proverbs describes it more accurately when he refers to "The way of the Lord." He has been gripped by this truth, that God moves in a certain direction and all the courses of events are the result of His planning and the purpose of His will as He works it out in the affairs of men.

He declares that "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity" (Proverbs 10:29). In the Hebrew tongue the word "strength" has the connotation of stronghold or fortress; so the way of the Lord is a place of protection and defense for the righteous, but it frowns with hostile arms upon the workers of iniquity. As a fort offers defense to those within and danger to those who stand without, so the purposes of God are ordained for the blessing of those who align themselves with Him and for the destruction of those who set themselves against Him.

Each man may decide whether he wishes to ride in the chariot of God's will or be crushed beneath His wheels. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous . . ." (Psalms 34:15), we are told. That is,

He looks upon them with tenderness and love, but “the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” The same divine countenance which smiles in benison upon His children, frowns in anger upon His enemies.

To each man, to a certain extent, is given the power of choice. He may go with the Lord in His way or he may set himself against it. In either case the purpose of God shall be realized, but in one instance with blessing and in the other with destruction. The Gospel offers eternal life to the one who accepts, but he who rejects the same Gospel condemns himself to destruction thereby, for the Gospel is the savour of life unto life and death unto death.

Great God! beneath whose piercing eye
The earth's extended kingdoms lie;
Whose favoring smile upholds them all,
Whose anger smites them, and they fall.
We bow before Thy heavenly throne;
Thy power we see, Thy greatness own;
Yet, cherished by Thy milder voice,
Our bosoms tremble and rejoice.
Thy kindness to our fathers shown
Their children's children long shall own;
To Thee, with grateful hearts, shall raise
The tribute of exulting praise.
Great God, our Guardian, Guide and Friend!
O still Thy sheltering arm extend;
Preserved by Thee for ages past,
For ages let Thy kindness last!
- William Roscoe

* * *

DEMONS FLEE

Jesus Christ on one occasion cast a great number of demons out of a poor creature who dwelt in tombs, cutting himself with knives, and “no man could bind him, no, not with chains” (Mark 5:1-5). The demons, coming out of the man, with the permission of God's Son entered a herd of swine which straightway plunged off a cliff and drowned themselves in the sea. We are told that when the people of the country found the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, “they were taken with great fear” (Luke 8:37), and asked

Jesus to depart from their country.

Those Gadarenes were so much like people we know. They were afraid of the miraculous. They beheld evidence of divine power, and instead of rejoicing at the freedom of the poor man from the demons which had controlled him, they were full of fear.

There are people who are afraid of a revival. They do not want to see God at work in the salvation of souls, the healing of the spiritually diseased ones, because they are afraid of that which is unusual and which they themselves cannot understand and analyze.

What a pity that men's fear of the miraculous must sometimes limit the work of God among them! Had Jesus stayed in the country of the Gadarenes, how many other poor demon-possessed men might have been freed, how many blind eyes might have been opened and how many lame men made to walk! But because they were afraid of the miraculous, they asked Him to leave; and, of course, when He left, the blessing and the power left with Him.

There was another cause for their request that He depart. They loved money more than they loved the souls of men.

He had cast out demons, the demons had entered the swine, and the swine had been drowned. The Gadarenes preferred to have their herd of pigs undisturbed rather than to see the demoniac clothed and in his right mind. They were more interested in pigs than they were in men.

Any man who traffics in that which debases souls, the man who sells liquor, runs a gambling den or any other place of debauchery and sin, is like those Gadarenes. Naturally, he does not want the Lord Jesus around, or the preaching of His Gospel to be heard, for that frees men from the bondage of their sin and hurts his business.

Jesus! the Name high over all, In hell or earth or sky;

Angels and men before it fall, And devils fear and fly.

Jesus! the Name to sinners dear, The Name to sinners given;

It scatters all their guilty fear;

It turns their hell to heaven.

O that the world might taste and see The riches of His grace!

The arms of love that compass me Would all mankind embrace.

Happy, if with my latest breath I may but gasp His Name;

Preach Him to all, and cry in death, "Behold, behold the Lamb!"

- Charles Wesley

* * *

SMALL PEBBLES When told that it was 92,000,000 miles from his house to the sun, a little child once asked his teacher, "Do you mean that far from the roof or the basement?" Poor little child! his house looked tall to him, but when you consider the millions of miles from the earth to the sun, the

height of the house is insignificant. Indeed, the height of the highest mountain is insignificant in comparison to those miles of space. When we compare the brief span of our own lives with the great eternity of God, we find we are “pretty small pebbles on a pretty big beach!”

God’s Word reminds us that we are to be clothed “with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). Quite plainly this means that the man who is proud finds God in opposition to him. God resisteth the proud man, but He gives grace to the humble. What is grace? It is spirituality. There is no such thing as a spiritual, proud man. A spiritual Christian is always an humble Christian. The great men of God have been humble in their personal lives, and with humble hearts they have walked before God as conscious of His blessings as of their own unworthiness.

One good way to secure humility is by looking deep down inside your heart and seeing all the ugliness there. Sometimes a scientific expedition goes out aboard a ship to gather specimens of unusual marine life. Nets are let down thousands of feet under the surface and when they are pulled up they contain strange creatures, awful looking things some of them, slimy and bloated creatures of the deep.

When the Holy Spirit turns the searchlight of God’s Word upon the human heart you find it full of ugliness for, “The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). How can we be proud, knowing that in our flesh dwelleth no good thing?

Having looked at yourself, behold the purity of Christ and the holiness of God!

She sat and wept beside His feet; the weight
Of sin oppressed her heart; for all the blame,
And the poor malice of the worldly shame,
To her was past, extinct, and out of date:
Only the sin remained, the leprous state;
She would be melted by the heat of love,
By fires far fiercer than are blown to prove
And purge the silver ore adulterate.
She sat and wept, and with her untressed hair
Still wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch;
And He wiped off the soiling of despair
From her sweet soul, because she loved so much.
I am a sinner, full of doubts and fears:
Make me a humble thing of love and tears.

- Hartley Coleridge

* * * STRANGLING RICHES

Nothing can be more fatal to spiritual life than worldly care and the pursuit of wealth. In His parable on the sower our Lord speaks of the seed which fell among thorns which sprang up and choked them, and in interpreting the parable to His disciples, He said:

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). No man or woman can avoid altogether the cares of this world. There are financial problems, a living to be made, business to attend to, children must be provided for and the house must be kept. In the complexities of our day there are a thousand nagging cares which face us. The pressure of details can so fill the mind that we cannot hear the voice of God. One can be so busy trying to look after business and discharging his responsibilities that he has no time for communion with the Lord and study of His Word. However, the more perplexed and care-ridden we are, the more necessary it is that we take time for spiritual things; the more harassed we are by problems, the more we need to turn to the Lord for help and strength and guidance. But by the care of the world, I think the Lord means not so much the perplexities and problems of life as a concern for worldly things far beyond their worth and importance or, in other words, an affection for temporal and worthless things.

The deceitfulness of riches can be even worse than the care of the world in its effect. The man who loves money is like one consumed with a fever. That which he thinks will quench his thirst leaves him more thirsty than ever. Riches are deceitful. They promise satisfaction, which they never bring, and the more the poor lover of wealth has of this world's goods the more he craves. It is no wonder he becomes unfruitful, for the deceitfulness of riches not only chokes out the Word of God from a man's life, but it also destroys and smothers all the finer impulses as well. The man who is avid in his greed for gold eventually finds all kindness and generosity and natural affection choked out by the thorns. Are you all silver? Is there naught of gold Upon you anywhere? You seem to go in silver When you walk, your shoes upon the pavement, splashing rain After a shower, or wading deep in moonlight Sifted through the shadows on the grass- A silver portrait in a frame; And when you talk One thinks of sun on icicles-something that's splendid, fine, And shining; your serenity Is like the placid waters of a sea, Tipped with a silver brush; Your laughter is the echo of a coin Striking a stone;

Yet, I have seen sword blades flash silver in the light,

And they were beautiful in their own fashion

But I found they were of death;

I have heard bugle calls at dawn, sending their silver notes

Across the peaceful hills. And I have thrilled to them until I knew of their deceit-

They drew men forth to die, And they were cruel; And I have read how One was sold for silver-

How the tinkling of the money whispered in a traitor's ear "Betrayal"-

I have learned all this, and I have learned how treacherous

Is silver, and how cold;

Are you all silver? Is there naught of gold About you anywhere at all- When you walk or talk? In all you do?

What of your heart- Is that of silver, too?

- Ruth M. Gibbs

* * * SCRIPTURE DISTORTED

It is true that anything can be proved by the Bible if one has no regard for truth and is willing to take a fragment of a verse here and another fragment of a verse there without regard for the context of either and put them together. Satan delights to misquote and misapply Scripture. It is one of his favorite methods of approach, and many of the fanatical demonstrations of our day find their inspiration in some such misuse of the Word of God.

One of the strange phenomena of my section of the country is snake handling. Newspapers occasionally carry stories of men and women who were killed by the bites of rattlesnakes which they were handling in religious meetings. I know nothing sadder than the way these poor people are deceived by Satan and misled by ignorant preachers. They base their strange practice of handling reptiles on Mark 16:18, which declares: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly things, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Just why they attempt to prove their piety by picking up snakes and not drinking poison is one of the things which nobody can understand or explain.

The message of the verse in Mark is plain in the light of its context. The Holy Spirit is saying that under certain circumstances when a man is doing God's will and is in the plan and purpose of God, He will do the miraculous in order to preserve his life. There is no doubt that God does provide miraculous keeping and protecting power many times. The Book also promises elsewhere, "He shall give His angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Matthew 4:6).

In connection with snake handling, it may be interesting to note this verse particularly. It is the Scripture which Satan quoted to Christ when he tempted Him to cast Himself down from the temple. It is a pity that the poor, deluded and misguided snake handlers do not read Matthew 4:1-25, where the accounts of our Lord's temptation are given, for they will note that when Satan quoted this verse to the Saviour in tempting Him to do a spectacular but senseless thing, our Lord replied: "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matthew 4:7). Snake handling is no proof of spirituality. It is an indication of a desire to show off. It is doubly to be regretted that such a thing is done in the name of piety and under the pretense of the worship of Almighty God. But how like Satan it is to use the serpent, which is the symbol of demonism in so many pagan religions of the world and the creature who was the instrument of man's temptation and fall in the garden, as a means of discrediting faith in Almighty God!

Upon the Gospel's sacred page

The gathered beams of ages shine;

And, as it hastens, every age
But makes its brightness more divine.
On mightier wing, in loftier flight,
From year to year does knowledge soar;
And, as it soars, the Gospel light
Becomes effulgent more and more.
More glorious still, as centuries roll,
New regions blest, new powers unfurled, Expanding with the expanding soul,
Its radiance shall o'erflow the world,-
Flow to restore, but not destroy; As when the cloudless lamp of day
Pours out its floods of light and joy, And sweeps the lingering mists away.

- John Bowring

* * * THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

There are many pleas made these days for tolerance, but often tolerance is not the right word for that which is demanded. What is meant is compromise. Tolerance and compromise are not the same thing.

- This is tolerance: to grant to another the same rights which I claim for myself.

- This is compromise: to sacrifice heartfelt conviction in order that someone else may be pleased or in order to avoid a breach of peace.

Tolerance and compromise are not children of the same family. Tolerance springs from greatness of character, compromise from lack of it.

As is to be expected, the demand for compromise made in the name of tolerance comes from those who have no convictions of their own and therefore have nothing to sacrifice. To the man who believes the Bible, the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Virgin Birth, His Death and Resurrection are the very essentials of the Christian faith. These are the essential foundations upon which Christianity is founded. Without them, he believes, there can be no such thing as a Christian Church.

Into many of our denominations of late years, however, come men who do not hold to these fundamentals of the faith, and in many instances these so-called "modernists" or "liberals" have come very largely into control of the affairs of some of the denominations. They are the ones who in the name of tolerance demand that other men who possess convictions throw them overboard.

They, themselves, are the least tolerant of men. Having no conviction of their own, they have no regard for the conviction of others. They make their demands for the sake of "unity and peace." Peace accepted at the price of compromise will never be a victorious peace, and peace which a

church achieves by sacrifice of fundamental principles is defeat.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself forever set up the standard when He said: "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). The man who is willing to sacrifice his convictions about the deity of the Lord Jesus on the altar of unity and peace is not tolerant. He is a compromiser.

Loud o'er my head though awful thunders roll,
And vivid lightnings flash from pole to pole
Yet 'tis Thy voice, my God, that bids them fly,
Thy arm directs those lightnings through the sky.
Then let the good Thy mighty Name revere,
And harden'd sinners Thy just vengeance fear.

- Sir Walter Scott

* * * ENEMIES -FRIENDS

Pilate and Herod were enemies. That is, they were enemies until the question, of what to do with Jesus Christ came up. This was a problem which faced them both. Herod was the ruler of Galilee, and Jesus was a Galilean. Since Herod was in Jerusalem at the time, Pilate threw the problem into his lap. Herod gave it back to Pilate.

Both men realized that here was a delicate matter and one in which were possibly locked up forces of revolt and rebellion which neither of them wished to meet. On the basis of this mutual fear, and because both lacked the courage to assume responsibility and release an innocent man, they became friends. As Luke's Gospel puts it: "The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves" (Luke 23:12).

Hatred also can bring together strange allies. When Christ hung on the Cross, the priests and leaders of Israel mocked Him, saying: "If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:40). The cry was echoed by the thieves beside Him and by the lowest rabble from the underworld of Jerusalem gathered around the Cross. Strange fellowship between priests and thieves, and between the national leaders and the outcasts of the population. Yet allies they were, in the business of mocking a dying man.

Both classes hated Him, the rulers and religious leaders because He spoke as one having authority and challenged their abuse of place and power and religious influence; the other, because the purity and beauty of His life and the perfection of His character were a constant source of reproof to theirs. Human nature has not changed much since then. Men who have reason for differing among themselves, men who have strong dislikes the one for the other, still are willing to forget them to join together in attacking a mutual enemy.

The recent great war showed striking examples of nations with different political concepts and economic theories fighting side by side against a common enemy. In the realm of religion, liberal ministers who hate the old Gospel message of individual salvation by the grace of God have joined with the representatives of Communistic organizations and atheistic societies in attacking

movements such as “Youth for Christ.” Christ’s words are still true: “He that is not with me is against me” (Matthew 12:30). When a man is not for Christ, is an enemy of the Gospel, he is quick to join hands with any other man who hates the same soul-stirring, heart-cleansing message and who is an enemy of the same Christ. When church members and drunkards, preachers and atheists, line up together, you can be pretty sure that Jesus Christ is on trial.

Thy foes might hate, despise, revile, Thy friends unfaithful prove;

Unwearied in forgiveness still, Thy heart could only love.

O give us hearts to love like Thee, Like Thee, O Lord, to grieve

Far more for others’ sins, than all The wrongs that we receive.

One with Thyself, may every eye In us, Thy brethren, see

That gentleness and grace that spring From union, Lord, with Thee.

- Edward Denny

* * * RELIGION VERSUS CHRIST

Religion is often the greatest enemy of truth. Religion is based upon tradition, opinion, custom or superstition. These may all be wrong, founded upon falsehood, nurtured in prejudice and accepted in ignorance. We must not confuse Christianity with religion. That which a man lives by becomes his religion. A man’s religion may be his avowed agnosticism. Christianity is the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word of God and as personal Saviour and Lord.

Religion was often His worst enemy when He was here on earth. He was thrust out of the synagogue. The priests condemned Him and led the public demonstration before the house of Pilate which preceded His Crucifixion. It was the priests, the representatives of the religion of Israel, who mocked Him when He hung upon the Cross. He was the God of Israel, the incarnate Son of God; and yet these men who called themselves the priests and servants of the Most High were most bitter in their hatred of Him. Conditions have not changed greatly.

Today the worst enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ are sometimes those who stand in pulpits, nominally Christian. They bear denominational labels, and they may even occupy high official positions.

- They are denominationalists, and denominationalism is their religion.

- They are not interested in honoring Christ;

- They are interested in extending the influence of their own organization.

- In their preaching, they strip Him of His deity and rob Him of the honor which is His due.

His Name is rarely mentioned in their sermons, and when He is referred to, it is as to a man and not as to the ever-living Son of God, who was from the beginning with God and who is the God of the Ages.

The Almighty God demands that we have no other gods before Him. The Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, declared: "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). Of those who would follow Him, He demands the forsaking of father and mother and houses and lands and all human things for His sake. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ, the desire to do His will and to make Him known to others through the preaching of His Gospel, should be the first and deepest purpose of everyone who claims to be His follower. Denominational affiliation, organizations of any sort, are valuable only as they serve this purpose and contribute to this end.

O where are kings and empires now, Of old that went and came?

But, Lord, Thy church is praying yet, A thousand years the same.

We mark her goodly battlements, And her foundations strong;

We hear within the solemn voice Of her unending song.

Unshaken as eternal hills, Immovable she stands,

A mountain that shall fill the earth, A house not made with hands.

- A. Cleveland Coxe

02.04. For God So Loved the World

“For God So Loved the World”

BRIDGING THE CHASM

CHAPTER FOUR When Louis Agassiz, the great Swiss naturalist, was a young boy, his mother sent him across the ice of a frozen lake to take a message to his father, who was on the other side. His little brother went along. After they had started, the mother noticed from the slope of the mountain where she was standing that there was a great fissure in the ice near the center of the lake. She realized that Louis would be able to leap across it, but that his little brother could never make it.

She tried to call them back; but the wind was blowing toward her, and her voice could not reach the children. All she could do was to watch and pray and hope that the little boy would not try to leap the crack in the ice. When they came to the fissure, she noticed that Louis measured the width with his eye and seemed to be weighing in his mind the ability of the little brother to leap it. Then, having decided, quite apparently, that his brother could never make the jump, he seemed to give him careful instructions; and then he threw himself across the chasm, and his little brother walked across his body. Louis then pulled himself across.

This is a wonderful example of what the Lord Jesus Christ does for men. He says: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Poor, human creatures have nothing in themselves which makes them acceptable unto God. They cannot leap the chasm of sin which separates them from fellowship with the Almighty; but the Lord Jesus Christ, on the Cross, bore the sin; and as He Himself became a propitiation for our sins, we are able to enter the fellowship of the Father through His merits. He is the Door by which we may enter heaven itself. He is the One who has broken down the middle wall of partition between God and men. He is the Living Bridge over which we may cross from death unto life, from sin unto salvation.

Prof. Louis Agassiz of Harvard University, said, “I will frankly tell you that my experience in prolonged scientific investigations convinces me that a belief in God adds a wonderful stimulus to the man who attempts to penetrate into the regions of the unknown.”

He dipped his pen in fire and sent

These words in flame across the sky:-

“Life is but living beauty”-then, all spent,

He watched the message die.

He wrapped his pen with dust of gold

And, peering on a vision far
As death, he cried, "Life is but growing old!"
And wrote upon a star.
But dawn, tangled in heaven's hair,
Brushed orbs of night aside and crept
Toward morn, while he in frenzy of despair
Trembled, and knelt, and wept-
And when, amazed, I saw him scrawl,
Pen dipped in blood: "Behold! Christ loved
And died; and this is life and light for all"-
Then heaven and earth were moved.

- Ruth M. Gibbs

* * * REFORMATION OR REGENERATION A thief may quit stealing because he decides that dishonesty does not pay. This does not mean that he is any less a thief at heart. He simply refrains from the practice of thievery because it is less of a strain to make a living in an honest fashion or because he is afraid of going to jail. The reasons for reformation are many. Reformation is an act of will and the permanence of the reformation depends upon the strength of the will.

Regeneration is a different matter altogether. It comes not from within but from without. A man is regenerated by faith in Christ. He is made over. He becomes a new creature. The change in his condition does not depend upon his own will but upon the grace and power of God. Regeneration can take man into paths of unselfish service where reformation never walks. Regeneration will lift him to heights of living to which reformation can never climb.

We find an example of this in the fourth chapter of Ephesians where the Christian is admonished: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28).

A reformed thief may quit stealing and set about earning an honest living but it takes divine grace imparted to a man in regeneration to put one who was a thief to work in order to be able to give the fruits of his labors to someone who has need.

- Reformation may change the outward course of a man's life. Regeneration changes his thought processes and the very attitude of his heart.

- Reformation may make a thief act like an honest man. Regeneration makes him an honest man and a charitable, unselfish one as well.

Come, ye disconsolate, where'er you languish, Come, at God's altar fervently kneel;

Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish- Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.

Joy of the desolate, light of the straying,

Hope when all others die, fadeless and pure, Here speaks the comforter, in God's name saying,

“Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot cure.”

Go, ask the infidel what boon he brings us,

What charm for aching hearts he can reveal, Sweet as that heavenly promise hope sings us,-

“Earth has no sorrow that God cannot heal.”

- Thomas Moore

* * *

ASLEEP AND DEAD

One of the most arresting truths in all the Bible is the truth of our own personal accountability to God. “Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” In Ephesians 5:14, God is speaking to the individual: “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” “Awake thou . . .” man or woman asleep and dead. Here we have a sinner addressed, a sinner described and salvation offered to a sinner. God’s message is a personal message.

Fathers have tried to take upon themselves the blame for the failures and sins of their children here on this earth. Wives have tried to take upon themselves the responsibility for the failures and sins of their husbands, but as far as the individual’s eternal destiny is concerned at the judgment bar, each one of us stands alone, personally, individually and solely accountable to God for himself.

The message here is a message to the individual. Today we are prone to overlook the fact that each individual must make his own peace with God.

- We have preached a social gospel in this last generation and have tried to reform society without redeeming the individual.

- We have tried to build a perfect world with imperfect men.

- We have tried to build a godly world with godless men.

Of course we have failed. Mankind cannot be changed by any shower bath of reform. The individual man must be cleansed by a personal application of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to his own life and soul.

The sinner is asleep under the hypnotic spell of the devil.

- He is not only asleep, he is also dead in trespasses and sin.

- He is sleeping on the brink of everlasting ruin.

- He is sleeping in a world which God visited in the person of His Son, who hung, bled and died on a cross, bearing the sins of all sleeping sinners in His own holy body.

- The sinner is sleeping in a world where Jesus conquered death, and to which He is coming again someday in judgment.

“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light!”

Sinners, turn; why will ye die?

God, your maker, asks you why;

God, who did your being give,

Made you with Himself to live;

He the fatal cause demands,

Asks the work of His own hands:

Why, ye thankless creatures, why

Will ye cross His love, and die?

Sinners, turn; why will ye die?

God, your Saviour, asks you why;

God, who did your souls retrieve,

Died Himself, that ye might live.

Will ye let Him die in vain?

Crucify your Lord again?

Why, ye ransomed sinners, why

Will ye slight His grace, and die?

Sinners, turn; why will ye die?

God, the Spirit, asks you why;

He, who all your lives hath strove,

Woed you to embrace His love;

Will ye not His grace receive?

Will ye still refuse to live?

Why, ye long-sought sinners, why

Will ye grieve your God, and die?

- Charles Wesley

* * * THE ONLY WAY The faithless fell from the ranks.

From the time that they discovered that all was not to be a pathway strewn with roses over which they should follow the Saviour to power and prominence-many deserted Him. "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" Then Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-68).

And to whom shall we go, if not to Christ?

He hath still the words of eternal life. The urge to live is innate in the human heart. Men cling to life. The instinct of self-preservation asserts itself in the actions of the poorest, most bestial savage and in the unconscious intellectual processes of the most civilized. Love of life and the determination to secure as much as possible of satisfaction and pleasure from each of its fleeting moments is universal. Man in a normal state of mind flees the dark-robed figure and leering, fleshless face of Death. Stunned by grief, crazed by pain, discouraged by disappointment and hardship, some seek his skeleton arms, not knowing that not death but more life, life in Christ, is the answer to their anguish and the relief from their pain. For He says "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," (John 10:10). If there were nothing beyond our brief day but darkness, sleep undisturbed by any dream, if this life were all-Christ only is the Fountain from which man may drink the draught of abundance.

But this life is not all. There is a life beyond this, and Christ only has the words of eternal life. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12), than the matchless name of Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6), said the Saviour.

The apostle John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Thou art gone to the grave! but we will not deplore thee,

Though sorrows and darkness encompass the tomb;

Thy Saviour has pass'd through its portal before thee,

And the lamp of His love is thy guide through the gloom!

Thou art gone to the grave! we no longer behold thee,

Nor tread the rough path of the world by thy side; But the wide arms of Mercy are spread to enfold thee,

And sinners may die, for the Sinless has died!

Thou art gone to the grave! and, its mansion forsaking,

Perchance thy weak spirit in fear linger'd long; But the mild rays of Paradise beam'd on thy waking, And the sound which thou heardst was the seraphim's song!

Thou art gone to the grave! but we will not deplore thee,
Whose God was thy ransom, thy guardian and guide;
He gave thee, He took thee, and He will restore thee,
And death has no sting, for the Saviour has died!

- Reginald Heber

* * * "FOLLOW ME" When you come right down to it, Christians are not, in the final analysis, following a special teaching; they are not following a set rule of conduct; they are not primarily following a creed. The Christian is following Christ—a living, divine Personality. Following Him, of course, they try to live up to the truths which He taught. They try to measure up to the principles of conduct which He set down, but no man is a Christian who has not come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. One is not a Christian because he goes to church. He is not a Christian even by giving assent to a creed. A man becomes a Christian through faith in Jesus Christ.

A man may believe the Bible is God's Word, he may believe everything that is in the Book, and be unsaved. A knowledge of the facts of Scripture and intellectual assent to those facts do not make a man a Christian. "Head" knowledge is not sufficient. One must have a heart experience of Christ. It is not believing in your head that He is able to save you, but it is in your heart flinging yourself upon His grace and trusting Him to save you that makes you a Christian. Cold and intellectual belief has no service value. Salvation comes when one believes in his heart, for he then entrusts himself to Christ.

The Christians of old Russia used to ask not, "Are you a Christian?" or "Do you know Christ?" but rather "Have you experienced Christ?" That is the thing which changes a man from a sinner to a saint. When a man experiences Christ he passes from a state of death in sin to life in Him.

The reality of Christ in the life is the power which makes the Christian different from other men. "Christ in you," is "the hope of glory." "Thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21). Of Him who did salvation bring,

I could forever think and sing;

Arise, ye needy, He'll relieve;

Arise, ye guilty, He'll forgive.

Ask but His grace, and lo, 'tis given!

Ask, and He turns your hell to heaven:

Though sin and sorrow wound my soul,

Jesus, Thy balm will make it whole.

To shame our sins He blushed in blood;

He closed His eyes to show us God:

Let all the world fall down and know
That none but God such love can show.
Insatiate to this spring I fly;
I drink, and yet am ever dry;
Ah! who against Thy charms is proof?
Ah! who that loves, can love enough?

- Bernard of Clairvaux

(Translated by Anthony W. Boehm)

* * * SALVATION'S MIRACLE

If you heard that a man with a steam shovel had excavated a city block for the foundation of a great building, you would have no reason to doubt the truth of the statement. Such a task would be relatively simple for an efficient operator with the proper machinery. If someone told you, however, that a twelve-year-old boy had done the same task with his toy shovel, you would not be likely to believe it, for the job would be beyond the strength of the lad and the capacity of his shovel too. So it is with the miraculous. If the God you believe in is big enough, you have no trouble accepting the miracles recounted in the Word of God. If, however, your conception of God dwarfs Him into a puny creature as weak as you yourself, you will naturally "stumble" over the miraculous.

- Why should not a God who can make an ocean and create fish and mammals preserve Jonah three days in the belly of a whale?

- Why should not the God who locks fires beneath the surface of the earth and controls their escape valves in the craters of volcanoes send down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice of Elijah?

- Why should not the God who created the elements and established the laws of the universe send a flood to cover the whole earth?

- Why should not He who proves His power in the recurring miracle of seedtime and harvest and who causes the grain dropped into earth to bring forth a hundredfold, perform the miracle of feeding 5,000 with the loaves and fish from the lunch basket of a lad?

After all, the greatest of all miracles is this, that God can transform a sinner and an outcast into a saint and a child of the Most High. This is a miracle which is performed many times each day.

The God who through the blood of His Son can change and transform a life and cleanse a soul from guilt is a God who is big enough to do anything.

He dies; the heavens in mourning stood;

He rises, and appears a God;

Behold the Lord ascending high,

No more to bleed, no more to die.
Hence and forever from my heart
I bid my doubts and fears depart,
And to those hands my soul resign
Which bear credentials so divine.

- Isaac Watts

* * *

OPEN THE DOOR The disciples had shut themselves in the upper room. Suddenly the risen Saviour stood in their midst (John 20:19). He passed through the bolted door. No bars of steel nor planks of wood offer a barrier to the omnipotent God of the universe. The only locked door which can shut Him out is the bolted portal of the human heart. This He never forces. Through this He never passes. He says: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20). He asks admission. He begs to be allowed to enter, but it is only when the will of man turns the lock, and flings wide the heart's door that God's Son will enter.

The great Sovereign of the universe will never force and override the will of any man. A man said to me on a train some time ago, "I cannot believe in a God who would send me to hell. A God who would send man whom he made to hell would be a cruel tyrant."

I think I surprised him when I said, "I agree with you. He would be a tyrant. God does not send any man to hell. If you go to hell, you go there of your own will." The man who goes to hell spurns divine grace, rejects God's love, stops his ears to the pleading of the Holy Spirit and pushes aside the Cross of Calvary, which God has set like a barrier across the gate of hell.

God calls out to the sinner, saying: "Turn, sinner, why will ye die." But under God, each man has the power to decide for himself what shall be the eternal destiny of his own soul. Man is offered the choice of life in Christ or death without Him. God seeks to persuade man to the right choice, but never tramples the human will under foot or forces the choice. A nail-pierced hand knocks upon the heart's door, but the King of the universe will not Himself force the lock or break down the door.

Behold, a Stranger at the door!

He gently knocks, has knocked before;

Has waited long, is waiting still;

You treat no other friend so ill.

O lovely attitude! He stands.

With melting heart and laden hands:

O matchless kindness! and He shows

This matchless kindness to His foes.

But will He prove a friend indeed?

He will; the very friend you need:

The Friend of sinners-yes, 'tis He,

With garments dyed on Calvary.

Rise, touched with gratitude divine;

Turn out His enemy and thine,

That soul-destroying monster, sin,

And let the heavenly Stranger in.

- Joseph Grigg

* * *

HANDS

What stories hands can tell-the hands of a mother as she bathes and caresses her baby, the hand of the farmer as it grips the plow, the hands of the laborer marked with toil, the hands of a grandmother as she knits in the flickering shadows of the fireside or the hands of a surgeon as he performs his delicate task!

God's Word has so much to say about hands. Matthew 26:57 states: "They laid hold on Jesus." Behold the hands of those men who reached out hands of rejection to seize the Son of God. See another pair of hands making a crown of thorns. Behold them as they push it down upon His brow. Other hands place a cross upon His back and drive Him out through the streets of Jerusalem and up the hill. Hands of rejection nail Him to the Cross, smite His face and pull out His beard. Oh, sad picture, as brutal men lay on the lash and drive the nail and erect the Cross. But have you not done the same thing? The person who refuses to yield his life to God's Son crucifies Him afresh-the touch of rejection; but he who opens his heart and accepts the Saviour has his hands of rejection washed white in the blood of the Lamb of God.

But there are hands of doubt. After the Resurrection of our Lord, when the disciples, for fear, had locked themselves in the upper room, Jesus came and stood in the midst, "the doors being shut . . ." (John 20:26). He had promised to go before and meet them in Galilee, but they tarried in Jerusalem behind locked doors because of doubt and fear, and He had to force His way through locked doors to stand in their midst.

He said: "Touch me and believe." They touched Him; and in touching, all the doubts fled and all the fears vanished. He who goes on in darkness and in doubt and in fear does so because he will not reach out to clasp a hand which waits beside him for his touch. No life is complete until it touches Him. All the glories of earth and all the fame of men and all the riches of the world can never bring complete fulfillment, but to touch the Son of God can bring joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Father, I stretch my hands to Thee; No other help I know:

If Thou withdraw Thyself from me, Ah! whither shall I go?
What did Thine only Son endure, Before I drew my breath!
What pain, what labor, to secure My soul from endless death!
Surely Thou canst not let me die;
O speak, and I shall live;
And here I will unwearied lie, Till Thou Thy Spirit give.
Author of faith! to Thee I lift My weary, longing eyes:
O let me now receive that gift! My soul without it dies.

- Charles Wesley

* * * "PASSING THE BUCK" No man can escape from a responsibility which is rightly his by simply seeking to avoid the discharge of that responsibility. That is what Pilate tried to do. He was the representative of the Roman government and as such the final authority on all matters of law in which a man's life might be at stake. It was his duty to render a decision as to whether or not Jesus Christ deserved death. If, under the law, Pilate had found Christ guilty and deserving of death, it was his obligation to pass the death sentence. On the other hand, finding Him innocent, it was his duty to set Him free and to give Him the protection of all the power of Rome, to which, as a free and innocent man, He was entitled.

What did Pilate do? He found Him innocent. He knew He was guiltless, but he knew if he did his duty as the Roman governor he would incur the antagonism of the influential Jewish priests.

He sent for a basin, therefore, and in the presence of the assembly washed his hands and said: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it" (Matthew 27:24). In modern slang, Pilate attempted to "pass the buck." Knowing Christ was innocent, Pilate sought to escape the responsibility of His death and passed the blame to the Jews. Pilate did not escape the responsibility. He has forever been guilty because he failed to discharge his obligation.

God has placed upon each of us certain responsibilities: family and financial, spiritual and moral. We may find them irksome. We may seek to escape them by refusing to discharge them, but our failure to discharge a responsibility does not remove from us the responsibility. We cannot avoid obligations by running away from them. We cannot escape responsibility by refusing to exercise it. It is the responsibility of each man to prepare for eternity by accepting God's salvation offered to him in Christ. The man who refuses to meet his responsibility in this matter is lost, not because he deliberately wishes to be lost, but because he refuses to face his obligation to become reconciled to God.

Must Jesus bear the Cross alone, And all the world go free?
No, there's a cross for everyone, And there's a cross for me.
How happy are the saints above
Who once went sorrowing here! But now they taste unmingled love,

And joy without a tear. The consecrated cross I'll bear, Till death shall set me free;

And then go home my crown to wear, For there's a crown for me.

- Thomas Shepherd

* * * BY HIS WORK ONLY

While the work of Satan in the world takes many forms, there is no doubt that he specializes in deception. His first contact with man was on this basis. He led Eve in the Garden to believe that the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was "to be desired to make one wise . . . (Genesis 3:6). Actually, it was not a thing to be desired at all but a thing to be shunned; for the wisdom which it brought destroyed innocency, wrecked the perfection of God's creation and cost man the Garden of Eden.

Satan still attempts to deceive men in many ways. He persuades them that some things are attractive which prove to be a source of sorrow and destruction. That which he represents as a blessing turns out to be a blight; that which he presents as desirable proves to be destructive.

One of Satan's most dangerous forms of deceit is this: he makes men and women believe that he tempts them only to wicked and immoral acts and that his work in the world is limited to tempting people into gross and fleshly sins. His field of deception is much broader than that and his work more dangerous in the realm of the spiritual than in the physical.

He causes men to believe that by only resisting the temptations of the flesh they become acceptable to God. He plants in human minds and hearts the conception that morality and good works is in itself all that is necessary to take one to heaven. Others he deceives into believing that the practice of certain rites and ceremonies earns salvation.

Terrible delusions these, for God's Word declares plainly that: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16); that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6); and that salvation is to be found not by works of righteousness which we may do, but by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed His blood on the Cross for our redemption.

The worst deceptions of Satan are in the realm of religion when he leads men to substitute works for Christ and self-righteousness for the Grace of God. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . ." (Acts 16:31).

This is God's way, all the delusions of Satan to the contrary notwithstanding. By Thy birth, and by Thy tears;

By Thy human griefs and fears;

By Thy conflict in the hour

Of the subtle tempter's power,

Saviour, look with pitying eye;

Saviour, help me, or I die.

By Thy lonely hour of prayer;

By Thy fearful conflict there;
By Thy Cross and dying cries;
By Thy one great sacrifice,
Saviour, look with pitying eye;
Saviour, help me, or I die.
By Thy triumph o'er the grave;
By Thy power the lost to save;
By Thy high, majestic throne;
By the empire all Thine own;
Saviour, look with pitying eye;
Saviour, help me, or I die.

- Robert Grant

* * * MANNA FROM ON HIGH

There is a remarkable parallel between spiritual life and physical life. A man comes into the world by means of physical birth. Then, having been born, it is necessary, if life is to be sustained and developed, that it be properly nourished. Therefore, food is an essential.

Food in itself, however, does not guarantee healthy, normal life. There also must be exercise and activity. Muscles which are unused soon atrophy, and no man ever develops fully into the finest specimen of physical manhood without attention to exercise and proper physical activity.

The same laws follow in the spiritual realm. No man possesses spiritual life until he is born into it. This is what the Lord Jesus Christ meant when He said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7).

This great fact has been so often overlooked in present-day preaching. No man can know the life of God or possess it until he secures it in God's way-that is, by the miracle of the new birth through faith in Christ. A man must be born of the Spirit before he possesses spiritual life. Then, having come into this experience, it is necessary that this life of the Spirit be nourished.

Spiritual nourishment comes through a study of the Word of God and through fellowship with Him in prayer. The Word of God, the Bible, is the nourishment which feeds the soul. No man can be a well-nourished Christian unless he feeds upon it regularly. First, he is nourished on the milk of the Word. Then, as he grows spiritually, he begins to understand other portions which at first were not clearly open to him; and as he goes deeper and deeper into the things of God, he finds himself feasting on the strong meat of the Word.

But it is not enough simply to be born and to nourish oneself spiritually. There must be, if the spiritual life is to be healthy and normal, plenty of exercise, and spiritual exercise comes as we work for the Lord.

All too many Christians are satisfied to enjoy their fellowship with God, to feed themselves upon the Word, to enjoy spiritual things without making any effort to make Christ known to others; and since they are not busy working for God, their spiritual development is hindered. There must be, for a healthy spiritual life, both nourishment and exercise.

To fail to nourish oneself spiritually means there is no strength for the spiritual exercise; there is no incentive to it. To feast on the Word and not use the spiritual energies derived therefrom in the service of the Lord will mean the lack of fullest development, and the spiritual life will be an unhealthy, abnormal one.

Lamp of our feet, whereby we trace Our path when wont to stray;

Stream from the fount of heavenly grace, Brook by the traveler's way;

Bread of our souls, whereon we feed, True manna from on high,

Our guide and chart, wherein we read Of realms beyond the sky;

Word of the everlasting God, Will of His glorious Son;

Without Thee how could earth be trod, Or heaven itself be won?

Lord, grant us all aright to learn The wisdom it imparts;

And to its heavenly teaching turn, With simple, childlike hearts.

- Bernard Barton

02.05. The Substance of Things Hoped For

“The Substance of Things Hoped For”

EYE OF FAITH

CHAPTER FIVE

Abraham believed God and “he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). By taking God at His word, by believing Him, is the only way that any man can become righteous in God’s sight. Abraham believed that the Lord would keep the covenant which He had made with Him when He said: “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3). Abraham believed God when He said: “Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and east ward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever” (Genesis 13:14-15). Believing God, Abraham looked forward with the eye of faith to the fulfillment of God’s promise in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Men today have righteousness imputed to them in the same way that Abraham did-by believing God. Apart from faith no man is righteous in the sight of God, for God tells us that:

- “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).
- “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
- “There is none righteous; no, not one” (Romans 3:10).

Exactly what is it that I must believe in order to be righteous? This: that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that apart from Him I cannot please God or know forgiveness of sin, and “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). Realizing, then, that I am a sinner, I must trust Him for salvation upon the mercy of God, believing that “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

This is the Gospel. This is the good news, that I, a poor sinner, lost and undone, without hope and having no means in myself of becoming acceptable unto God, find redemption from sin in trusting the perfect Son of God as my Saviour, realizing that not upon my merits but upon His sacrifice for me on Calvary depends my salvation, knowing that He who knew no sin was made sin for us “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

There was a rift tonight-

I saw a grey cloud break and let the light

Shine through-a ray of hope to all the earth;

Long had I waited here; I found it hard to say

“The clouds will drift apart, the darkness melt away
Before the radiance of the night’s new birth.”
When lo! I saw it come-
That promised glow to guide a wayward one;
At last, after long hours of doubt and fear
Came light again, and life, and sweet security,
As though a hidden ray from God’s eternity
Peeped out that I might look and see it there.
So, if I can but wait
I know that God will send it, soon or late-
This break within my life’s grey cloud; His gift
To me one star of perfect love to shine and show
That they who walk by faith are told the way to go,
And after storm will come the blessed rift.

- Ruth M. Gibbs

* * *

LABOR UNION

There is, in a church at Copenhagen, a statue by Thorvaldsen depicting the Lord Jesus Christ extending the invitation, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). There is an interesting story in regard to the statue. It is said that when it was first placed in the church, a great art critic came to see it. As he stood before the statue, his face gave evidence of his disappointment in the work and his disapproval of it. A little child standing near said, “Oh, no, you are not looking at it right; you must go close to the statue and kneel and look up.” Taking the advice of the child, the critic knelt at the feet of the marble figure of Christ, and looking up, he caught from that angle a full view of the sculptured features and was entranced by the lifelike beauty and sweetness of the face.

The story may or may not be true, but it illustrates a very important truth. The man who sees Jesus Christ rightly must look upon Him with an humble heart. Humanism approaches Jesus Christ with the attitude that here is a man, the finest development to which our humanity has ever attained. The humanist in the pride of his own intellect cannot, standing with head erect and filled with the pride of a fleshly heart, ever behold Jesus Christ as He is; for though the only perfect man that ever graced the earth, He is so much more than mere man that the humanistic view of Him can never be the full and perfect view.

In accepting the invitation of the Son of God to "Come unto Me . . ." we must come as those to whom the invitation is addressed: the weary and the heavy laden, those who are needy and sorrowing and who come in simple, childlike faith, expecting to find the burden lifted and the need met. It is the pure, not the proud in heart, who see God. The most restful position which the soul can know is the kneeling position, for it is bowed thus that the burden can be lifted from our backs.

"Come unto Me, ye weary,

And I will give you rest."

O blessed voice of Jesus, Which comes to hearts oppressed!

It tells of benediction, Of pardon, grace and peace,

Of joy that hath no ending, Of love which cannot cease.

"And whosoever cometh, I will not cast him out."

O welcome voice of Jesus, Which drives away our doubt!

Which calls us, very sinners, Unworthy though we be

Of love so free and boundless, To come, dear Lord, to Thee!

- William C. Dix

* * * A MYSTERIOUS WAY

"There is so much in the Bible that I cannot understand." How often is this given as an excuse for not accepting Christ as personal Saviour. There may be much in the Bible a man cannot understand, but he can understand all he needs to understand in order to be saved.

- "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved . . ." (Acts 16:31).

- "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9).

- "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

The question is not, Do you understand all the Bible? The question is, Are you willing to obey as much as you can understand? Whenever a man seeks to do God's will, he will know God's will.

God is just and will not leave an honest man, who earnestly endeavors to please Him, in doubt as to what he should do. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God . . ." (John 7:17).

After all, understanding is a matter of the head. The desire to please is of the heart. No man can fully understand God. If he could, he would be as wise as God. Men cannot analyze God, though theologians may try. His thoughts and His ways are above and beyond the comprehension of the human mind. But God can be obeyed. God does not demand that men understand all the marvelous grace behind the plan by which He saves a poor lost soul. He invites them to trust that grace. In simple faith and trust, salvation is found. It is not by the brilliance of their intellectual

grasp that men please God. He delights rather in a heart which is turned in childlike trust to Him. "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea, And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs, And works His sovereign will.
Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take; The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break In blessings on your head.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense, But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning Providence He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast, Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste, But sweet will be the flower.
Blind unbelief is sure to err, And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter, And He will make it plain.

- William Cowper

* * * "IT SHALL BE GIVEN"

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7).

Asking presupposes the power of giving. No man asks another for something which he knows he is unable to grant. One does not ask riches of a poor man or food of a man who is hungry. No wise man asks a favor of one who is powerless to grant his request. Asking of God, we are making our request to the One who has power "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think . . ." (Ephesians 3:20). The man who rightly asks is the man who asks in faith, believing that God is able to grant and that God is willing to grant.

The matter of prayer goes beyond asking, however. We are told to seek, and promised that in seeking we shall find. God sometimes expects us to seek for the answer to our prayer. We may even say He expects us to help Him to answer it. I have known young men who were studying for the ministry to pray the Lord to send them money to meet the needs of their educational expenses, when they were too lazy to go out and make the effort to raise the money. It is good to ask the Lord to send, but it is better sometimes to pray, "Lord, direct me in my search and send me where I will find the thing which I desire."

Some folks pray for a deepening of their spiritual life, yet never seek to find deeper spiritual life in earnest communion with the Lord and in study of His Word. Some pray for patience, but never seek the tribulation which worketh patience.

True prayer goes still further. "To him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:8), is the promise. Some people are not willing to knock and wait for the door to swing wide. They try to tear it open themselves or break it down. God in His own good time will remove the obstacles. When He is ready the door will open. Perfect prayer harnesses itself to the will of God. Perfect faith waits for the answer to come in His own way at His own time.

Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice Rise like a fountain for me night and day. For what are men better than sheep or goats That nourish a blind life within the brain If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer Both for themselves and those who call them friends ? For so the whole round earth is every way Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.

- Alfred Tennyson

* * *

FEAR OR FAITH

I wonder if you ever noticed in reading the account of the Resurrection of our Lord how much there is of fear and perplexity in the story.

When the women came early on that Easter morning and found angelic visitors instead of Roman guards, an open tomb and an empty sepulcher instead of a sealed burial place, they were so frightened that the angel had to tell them not to be afraid.

At least one woman looked upon the beauty of the garden that Easter morning through the glistening of her tears. In John's narrative we are told that as Mary stood outside that open tomb the wondering angels asked her why she wept, and Jesus Himself when He came and stood before her asked the reason for her tears.

There was certainly perplexity. The Apostle Peter, having heard from the women the angel's announcement of the Resurrection of the Saviour, and having come and seen for himself the empty tomb, went away "wondering in himself at that which had come to pass."

All this fear and grief and uncertainty came because they had failed to understand the plain words of Christ when He had foretold His Resurrection as He had talked to them of His death and burial. Now the time for grief and fear was over. The Lord was risen! The tomb was empty! All had happened just as He had said it would. There was now proof of the fulfillment of His promise-the testimony of the angels and the evidence of the empty tomb, but they could not quite comprehend. Their understanding was dull and their eyes were blind to the truth.

How much sorrow and fear and perplexity we could avoid if we would listen to the Saviour when He speaks! How much unhappiness comes because we fail to take Him literally! How clear and plain is His statement that "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life!" Yet men wander on in the misery and wretchedness and unhappiness of sin because they will not believe in Him. Others of us trust Him as our Saviour and possess the eternal life which is found in Him, and yet go through life failing to enjoy the privileges which are ours as sons of God because we do not take Him at His Word. We worry about our physical needs-food and clothing-because we do not take His promise to provide these things as literal and sure. We are

frightened and perplexed by the sudden changes in conditions which face us all. We are disturbed and afraid because we fail to heed His assuring utterance that: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." The open tomb rebukes our lack of faith. I wonder that we do not hear the Resurrected Saviour saying to us as He said to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus that Easter day: "Oh, fools, and slow of heart to believe . . .!"

He dies! the Friend of sinners dies!

Lo! Salem's daughters weep around;

A solemn darkness veils the skies, A sudden trembling shakes the ground.

Here's love and grief beyond degree: The Lord of Glory dies for man!

But lo! what sudden joys we see, Jesus, the dead, revives again! The rising God forsakes the tomb; In vain the tomb forbids His rise;

Cherubic legions guard Him home, And shout Him welcome to the skies.

Break off your tears, ye saints, and tell

How high your great Deliverer reigns;

Sing how He spoiled the hosts of hell,

And led the monster death in chains!

Say, "Live forever, wondrous King!

Born to redeem, and strong to save";

Then ask the monster, "Where's thy sting?"

And. "Where's thy victory, boasting grave?"

- Isaac Watts

* * *

SEED OF FAITH The Bible encourages man to do good. The man who really loves the Lord will show it by the kindness and goodness of his daily life. The souls of men are not saved by good works. Isaiah says, "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."

In the sight of a God who is pure and holy, with purity and holiness beyond the comprehension of men, the highest human morality comes far short of the divine standard. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Paul states this truth thus: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Everything about our salvation comes as a divine gift from God. Grace is the unmerited favor which God extends to men. Even the faith by which we lay hold on salvation is a gift from God. It is not of ourselves. There is nothing about being saved which should make a man proud, "puffed up,"

and boastful. God has made salvation a free gift. It is “not of works,” and there can be no reason for human boasting. To some men God has given great faith. The Bible refers to the measure of faith (Romans 12:3), indicating that to some men has been given more abundantly of this spiritual gift than to others; but to any man who wants to be saved God gives all the faith necessary.

A little faith goes a long way. A pinch no larger than a grain of mustard seed is enough to move mountains (Matthew 17:20), and faith, like a seed which is planted, will grow and increase a thousandfold. No one who ever wanted to believe was denied the gift of faith necessary to believe if he asked for it. The man who by faith has trusted Christ as his personal Saviour will find that God will increase his faith as he exercises it.

A man who came to Jesus with a child to be healed said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,” and the Lord healed his child. He had faith enough to believe Jesus could do it or he would never have come to Him, and, seeing his child healed, his faith in the power of Christ was increased. The sinner who by faith trusts Christ as his Saviour will find his faith increasing as he witnesses the manifestations of Christ’s power in his life.

O for a faith that will not shrink, Though pressed by every foe,
That will not tremble on the brink Of any earthly woe!
That will not murmur nor complain Beneath the chastening rod,
But, in the hour of grief or pain, Will lean upon its God;
A faith that shines more bright and clear When tempests rage without;
That when in danger knows no fear, In darkness feels no doubt.

- William H. Bathurst

* * * THE TIMID TOUCH

Jesus Christ never asked any man a question in order that He Himself might acquire information. God’s Son is Himself all wisdom and all knowledge, and as the God who made men, He knows their thoughts and all the workings of their minds. Whenever the Lord Jesus Christ asked a question it was for some purpose touching the person to whom he addressed Himself. Sometimes it was to break down a wall or reticence and to begin a conversation that He might reach the heart of the one to whom He spoke.

Once He was passing through the streets of a city surrounded by a great throng. He suddenly stopped and said: “Who touched me?” (Luke 8:45). The disciples, not understanding the reason for the question, wondered at it, and said to Him, “The multitude throng thee and press thee . . .” (Luke 8:45).

To them the question seemed almost foolish considering the multitude pressing upon Him from every side. God’s Son knew that through the crowd had come a poor, sick woman who with a trembling hand but a heart full of faith had reached out to touch His garment believing that she would be healed thereby. He knew who had touched Him. He knew why He had been touched. There must have been, therefore, a reason for His question.

Possibly someone in that multitude needed to learn a lesson of faith. Here was an opportunity to teach them the power of faith by a living example. But I think there was another reason.

The poor, timid woman who in humility had reached out to touch the hem of His garment and had found healing in the touch was not to be allowed to go away without a personal knowledge of Him who healed.

It was not the garment but the Wearer who gave life and healing. In faith she had touched the fringe of the robe. In love He wanted her to know Him. Her faith had brought her to the Saviour and a miracle of healing had been wrought. The Saviour wished to assure her of His love.

We may not climb the heavenly steeps

To bring the Lord Christ down; In vain we search the lowest deeps,

For Him no depths can drown.

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet A present help is He;

And faith has still its Olivet, And love its Galilee.

The healing of the seamless dress Is by our beds of pain;

We touch Him in life's throng and press, And we are whole again.

Through Him the first fond prayers are said Our lips of childhood frame;

The last low whispers of our dead Are burdened with His name.

O Lord and Master of us all, What'er our name or sign,

We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call, We test our lives by Thine!

- John G. Whittier

* * * REJECTED BLESSING

"They despised the pleasant land . . ." (Psalms 106:24).

These words the Psalmist applies to Israel. Having been freed from Egyptian bondage, having been saved from Pharaoh at the Red Sea under the leadership of Moses, they came to the border of Canaan. The spies sent in to look over the land, came back reporting a rich and fertile land, but with high-walled cities inhabited by giants. The Lord had promised to give them the land-to make it theirs forever, but they despised it. That is, they did not want it enough to fight for its possession. Their fear of the giants was stronger than their desire for the land of promise.

How many people fail to realize all the fullness of blessing which God has in store for them because they are unwilling to pay the price or because they are afraid of the giants which must be faced, giants of scorn and ridicule, giants of loneliness and privation-and sometimes the giant of self.

The tribes of Israel despised the pleasant land because they lacked vision to see it as God intended it should be-their land. They saw it as a country held by giants. God saw it as a dwelling

place for Israel. They beheld the heathen altars and groves. God saw the Temple of Solomon. Their eyes were upon the walled cities of the Canaanitish nations. God's were upon a land of twelve united tribes. So we often despise a pleasant thing which God wishes us to possess, because we see it, not as it may become with the victories of the years, but as it looks to us today, frightening and to be avoided.

The root of the whole matter was that Israel lacked faith. The God of Moses and his people had proved Himself powerful enough to overthrow the Canaanites and give Israel the land which He had promised, but their fear was greater than their faith. Perhaps that is all too often our trouble!

There must be thorns amid life's flowers, you know, And you and I, wherever we may go, Can find no bliss that is not mixed with pain, No path without a cloud. It would be vain For me to wish that not a single tear Might dim the gladness that you hold so dear.

I am not wise enough to understand All that is best for you. The Master's hand Must sometimes touch life's saddest chords to reach Its sweetest music, and His child to teach To trust His love, till the long, weeping night Is all forgotten in the morning light.

Trust, trust Him, then, and thus shall good or ill Your trustful soul with present blessing fill.

Each loss is truest gain if, day by day, He fills the place of all He takes away.

- Anonymous

* * * BEYOND THE HILLS

There are many who claim to be children of God, who call themselves Christians, of whom God must be greatly ashamed. Their lives are full of sin; they are constantly defeated by temptation; they are so in love with the world and the things of the world that they have little time or desire for fellowship with God. That there are some of whom God is not ashamed is very evident from the reading of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. We are told that of some, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others, God was not ashamed; in fact, the sixteenth verse of this chapter says: "God is not ashamed to be called their God."

The reason why they were no cause for shame to their Lord is made clear in the chapter. We are told there that they saw God's promise afar off; that is, that long before the promise should be fulfilled, they trusted in the promises. In other words, they took God at His Word; they believed Him.

There are many today who do not. They trust the words of men, but hesitate to give full credence to the Word of God. These discussed in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews were convinced by God's promise. That means that they were so sure that what He had promised He would perform that they brought their whole lives into line with His promise; that is, they accepted God's Word so fully that they lived in expectation of the fulfillment of His promise. Therefore, their whole lives were different from the lives of their neighbors and those among whom they sojourned.

The same thing is true of the life of a man in our day who is fully convinced that God will do what He has promised to do. He will seek to bring his life into the place where God's best promises can be fulfilled toward him.

In the third place, God was not ashamed of them because, believing His promise and bringing their lives into line with His will, they greeted them. The word used in the King James Version is “embraced,” which means, “hailed” or “greeted.”

This is the picture: a man on a long journey stops on a hilltop and looks out across the distant valley where he sees the home toward which he is going, nestling on another hillside, and from the distance, though the mists may lie between and make his view shadowy and indistinct, he nonetheless perceives his house, and he lifts his hand to wave a greeting to one who stands on the porch.

So these, believing God’s promise of a heavenly city, were so assured that there was a home prepared, because God had said He would prepare it, that they actually lived as these who see in the distance that toward which they are journeying and who, assured of its reality, wave out a greeting toward it.

God was not ashamed of them, nor is He ashamed of those in our day who have the same faith and confidence and trust in Him.

I love to steal awhile away From every cumbering care,

And spend the hours of setting day In humble, grateful prayer.

I love in solitude to shed The penitential tear,

And all His promises to plead

Where none but God can hear.

I love by faith to take a view Of brighter scenes in heaven;

The prospect doth my strength renew, While here by tempests driven.

Thus, when life’s toilsome day is o’er, May its departing ray

Be calm at this impressive hour, And lead to endless day.

-Phoebe H. Brown

* * * FAITH BRINGS MIRACLES

How often our Lord Christ performed great miracles quietly, almost in secrecy, and admonished those who beheld them that they should tell no man. So it was when the daughter of Jairus was raised from the dead.

The Lord came into the house where the body of the maiden lay. Oriental mourners, according to custom, filled the house with their cries. When He arrived, Luke tells us, “He put them all out . . .” (Luke 8:54), and taking with Him only the mother and father of the maiden and Peter and James and John, He went in and took her by the hand saying: “Maid, arise,” and life came again to her.

There are several reasons why the Lord ordered the mourners out.

In the first place, they had no faith, and lack of faith is always a difficulty to be overcome in the performance of a miracle. When He said “She (the maid) is not dead, but sleepeth,” they “laughed

Him to scorn.” God’s power is great enough to overcome any obstacle, but our Lord demands faith if He is to work a miracle for men. It need not be much faith. Indeed, on one occasion when asked by our Lord if he believed, a man cried: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

This was poor faith, it was faith enough to believe that God could provide the faith necessary to claim the miraculous, and faith need be only as a grain of mustard seed for God to honor it. Sometimes, as when Lazarus was raised, Jesus Christ permitted the doubters to stand by that God’s power might be shown and their doubts rebuked; but the mourners in the house of Jairus were not only doubters, they were scoffers, and the blessed Saviour would not permit them to behold a miracle.

Some things are too sacred for any but the eyes of love. Into the room where the dead maiden lay, the Lord took the three disciples who loved Him and the father and mother who loved their child; and in the presence of these, love which yearned for a miracle and faith which believed it possible, saw before their own eyes how love and faith can be rewarded. How often are the love and faith of father or mother still honored by the miraculous! Many a parent who believes that God can save a child, in his love for the lost son or daughter, lays hold upon God until the miracle is accomplished.

A home where sorrow had ceased to be found was no place for mourners. The shutting out of those who were crying and weeping for a dead child was both a token of joy to come in the Resurrection and a sign of the love of the Saviour who wished the dead girl restored to her parents, not in the midst of the noise of grief, but in the quiet and the friendly surroundings of the peaceful life which she had known.

Faith believed for a miracle, love demanded it and Christ supplied it. The waves unbuild the wasting shore; Where mountains towered, the billows sweep,

Yet still their borrowed spoils restore, And build new empires from the deep.

So while the floods of thought lay waste The proud domain of priestly creeds,

Its heaven-appointed tides will haste To plant new homes for human needs.

Be ours to mark with hearts unchilled The change an outworn church deplures;

The legend sinks, but Faith shall build A fairer throne on new found shores.

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

* * * “DAY BY DAY” When Jesus Christ sent out the twelve disciples, He admonished them to take nothing for the journey-neither money nor scrip nor bread nor extra clothing. There is a sound reason for this, as there is in everything which the Lord did.

These men were sent forth on a special mission-to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

To be burdened with unnecessary possessions would have hindered them in their going. The journeys were to be hard; they were to be made on foot. Often they would enter places of poverty. For them to be weighted down with possessions or with money in their hands would have delayed them and hindered them in their contact with people who were themselves so often, poor.

There can be no greater barrier sometimes than that which wealth raises between its possessor and the one who lacks it. Our Lord did not wish His disciples to be concerned with things, for all too often the possession of something breeds greed for something else. Many a preacher has been lured from his love for lost souls by a growing love for money. As the riches of the world increase, not only do its cares increase, but their demand upon the time and thought and energies of their possessor also increase. These men were to be occupied with preaching, not with acquiring. They were to be busy with the care of sick souls and bodies, not with the care of money and things.

How much of criticism was avoided by our Lord's injunction! Had these men, sent out by the Saviour, accepted payment for preaching or for healing, it would have been said of them, "They did it for money."

While it is true that such criticism has been often unfairly directed against the servants of the Lord, there can be little doubt that the present system of paying the preacher provides a basis upon which even so false a structure of criticism can be erected.

It is equally true that the servant is worthy of his hire. In our modern day, God's ministers must live by their ministry. However, in these early days when the first preachers went out, our Lord intended that their payment should be food and shelter and the meeting of their needs by those who heard them or were healed, and that there should be no accumulation of things beyond the need of each day.

There was also a test of faith for the disciples in our Lord's command. The faith which heals must be the faith which trusts the Giver of the power of healing. If these men were to preach a Word which could transform lives and stretch out a hand to heal sick bodies, they must have hearts which rested upon their Lord, that trusted Him to meet their own needs every day.

While the command may not apply literally to us, and while it is true that it was addressed to the early disciples, perhaps if we took less thought for the morrow, we might find more power in our lives today.

Day by day the manna fell:

O to learn this lesson well.

Still by constant mercy fed,

Give me, Lord, my daily bread.

"Day by day," the promise reads,

Daily strength for daily needs:

Cast foreboding fears away;

Take the manna of today.

Lord! my times are in Thy hand:

All my sanguine hopes have planned,

To Thy wisdom I resign,
And would make Thy purpose mine.
Thou my daily task shalt give:
Day by day to Thee I live;
So shall added years fulfill,
Not my own, my Father's will.
- Josiah Conder

02.06. Oh How Great Is Thy Goodness

“Oh How Great Is Thy Goodness”

“REJOICE EVERMORE”

CHAPTER SIX

Genuine piety is never long-faced. Sin makes men unhappy; religious pride and egotism may make them miser able; but God’s grace brings joy and happiness.

Some people seem to feel that an unhappy countenance or a mournful expression indicates spirituality and righteousness. God’s Word indicates that the contrary is true. A Christian has every reason for rejoicing. God’s way is a way of joy. Indeed, the only place that full and abundant happiness is found is in the proper relationship with God.

The Psalmist wrote: “In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalms 16:11). Christians are commanded to rejoice, and it is a command that it is no effort to obey. “Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice” (Php 4:4). “Rejoice evermore” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). This is God’s injunction to His children. Christ declared: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Surely no abundance of life is possible unless there is peace and happiness in the heart.

After all, the Christian has every reason for rejoicing. His sins have been forgiven. He no longer has to carry a burden of guilt. Having met God’s conditions, he has the divine promise that his sins will be remembered against him no more forever (Hebrews 8:12). He has constant companionship of God Himself. The Spirit of God which in dwells him bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God and assures him of constant guidance and comfort. In time of sorrow-sorrows come, of course, to all men-he has the promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5); and his Saviour, who was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3), enters into the fellowship of his suffering and brings, in the time of sadness, the light of His presence and the blessing which comes from knowing that God Himself carries the burden of sorrow for us.

He has power to resist temptation. “Greater is he that is in you,” the Bible declares to the saved man, “than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

Whatever may come of affliction, of war, of disappointment, has over it the gleam of this promise; and all the storms of life are brightened by the rainbow of the Christian hope.

Even death itself holds no terrors, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). We are assured that because he lives, we shall live also (John 14:19). The grave may be dark, but beyond it is the glory of resurrection and the promise of an heavenly home where “God shall wipe away all tears . . .” (Revelation 21:4) from the eyes of men, where there is no sorrow or sighing, where nothing shall ever enter that mars and blights and destroys.

Indeed, perhaps after all, the Christian should be long-faced; but he should be long-faced east and west, not north and south. It should be a smile and not a frown which lengthens the countenance of God's child. What a pity that sinful men and women, seeking in the world for satisfaction and pleasure, do not realize that the only true joy and the only lasting happiness are found in Christ.

Never, dear Lord, let me give sparingly Of what I have; if it be joy, I pray,

Help me to share it gladly-tenderly- As Thou would'st have me-always; if some day

I chance upon a spark of loveliness May I not selfishly quench all its fire,

By hoarding it, but may it live to bless Someone nearby; this would be my desire: To give of love all that I have-and more- If that could be-to borrow joy and lend

It out again-to keep an open door, Without a lock upon my heart, that friend,

Ah, yes! and foe-might find some needed guide Within. Tonight I think of Calvary;

Thou didst give all-Thy life-Thy love-and died- Never, dear Lord, let me give sparingly.

- Ruth M. Gibbs

* * * "PLENTY OF SILVER" The truth that human nature never changes is plainly evidenced in the Bible. The reader will find such strikingly "modern logic" in the book of Job that he will almost imagine someone of his neighbors speaking it. Job's friends sitting with him on the ash heap and attempting to offer him the comfort of their own poor philosophy have many brothers alive today.

Their language may be oriental and picturesque as compared to the modern, prosaic phrases of our twentieth century, but the thought is so often the same. Listen to Eliphaz, one of the "comforters": "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto them . . . Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defense, and thou shalt have plenty of silver" (Job 22:21; Job 22:25). In good sound modern English, we hear it expressed so often thus, "It pays to be religious."

While it is true that it is better to be decent than immoral, upright than dishonest, that which was untrue in Eliphaz's day is still untrue now. God does not promise great wealth, or in Eliphaz's words "plenty of silver," to the righteous any more than He promises poverty to the unrighteous. In fact, we are told not to be "envious against the workers of iniquity." Plenty of money sometimes comes to a man who is a crook and a rascal, and there is many a child of God who has little enough of this world's goods. God's promise is:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

God does not promise "plenty of silver." He does promise that all needful things shall be supplied. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Neither is a mere accumulation of temporal possessions an indication of the fullness of one's life.

Eliphaz's reasoning was unsound, for he himself had but a poor acquaintanceship with God and his idea of peace was confined to tranquility in one's environment, with plenty to eat and plenty to drink and silver to spend.

Though troubles assail, and dangers affright,
Though friends should all fail, and foes all unite,
Yet one thing secures us, whatever betide,
The promise assures us, "The Lord will provide."
The birds, without barn or storehouse, are fed;
From them let us learn to trust for our bread:
His saints what is fitting shall ne'er be denied,
So long as 'tis written, "The Lord will provide."
No strength of our own, nor goodness we claim;
Our trust is all thrown on Jesus' name:
In this our strong tower for safety we hide;
The Lord is our power, "The Lord will provide."
When life sinks apace, and death is in view,
The word of His grace shall comfort us through:
Not fearing or doubting, with Christ on our side,
We hope to die shouting, "The Lord will provide."

- John Newton

* * * OMNIPOTENT FORCES

Everyone who knows anything about the Bible recognizes that it not only contains God's commandments to men, but that it is also full of advice and good examples. Yet men who are so quick to break the laws and violate the commandments are slow to heed the advice and follow the good examples.

Speaking of examples, Hezekiah set one for us. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, had sent threatening letters to Hezekiah. Sennacherib was a powerful monarch with strong armies; Hezekiah's kingdom was relatively weak. Hezekiah did a wise thing. He took the letter into the presence of the Lord, spread it out before Him and appealed to Him to solve the problem (Isaiah 37:14). Hezekiah felt a divine assurance that the Lord was interested in the matter since the threatened kingdom was the kingdom of His people and he knew that Judah's only hope lay in the power of God.

If we have by faith identified ourselves with the Lord, and if we are willing to bear the reproach of His name before men, everything that touches us is a matter of interest to God. We have a right, then, to believe that He is willing to solve the problem. That He is able to do so should be evident, for He upholds all things by the Word of His power, and He who is the Lord of heaven and earth can certainly surmount the difficulties which confront us. Why should we not, then, follow

Hezekiah's example and lay our problems before Him?

Hezekiah's prayer over the open letter from Sennacherib set omnipotent forces at work. The result of that prayer was revealed days later when the citizens of Jerusalem found Sennacherib's army dead. God heard Hezekiah and sent the angel of death in the night to smite His enemies where they lay, and "the might of the Gentile . . . melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."

One man prayed: God slew an army. Hezekiah trusted and Jerusalem was saved.

Light of the world! whose kind and gentle care Is joy and rest;

Whose counsels and commands so gracious are, Wisest and best,-

Shine on my path, dear Lord, and guard the way,

Lest my poor heart, forgetting, go astray.

Lord of my life! my soul's most pure desire, Its hope and peace;

Let not the faith Thy loving words inspire Falter, or cease; But be to me, true Friend, my chief delight,

And safely guide, that every step be right.

My blessed Lord! what bliss to feel Thee near, Faithful and true;

To trust in Thee, without one doubt or fear, Thy will to do;

And all the while to know that Thou, our Friend,

Art blessing us, and wilt bless to the end.

- Henry Bateman

* * * THE FALLEN GREAT

"In the days of Herod the king . . ." Matthew tells us, "Jesus was born . . ." (Matthew 2:1).

Thus the name of the king is mentioned, but mentioned in connection with the coming of God's Son. No doubt Herod felt very important. After all, was he not king? Was he not a great personage whom men delighted to honor? Was he not a friend of the great Caesar himself? What was more natural than that things should be dated by the year of his reign?

But this One who was born had been from the beginning the very God Himself. The prophet Micah had said: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). So "in the days of Herod the king . . ." there came forth the One whose goings forth had been from everlasting.

Herod is chiefly known as the king who happened to be on the throne at the time of the birth of Christ. His place in history is due entirely to the fact that he was the king who sought for the Infant to kill Him and the one to whom the wise men came saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"

Men have their little day, statesmen, and sages, and popular demagogues; they strut across the stage of history. Every day is the day of some man, who, by reason of birth or political importance or money or even because of some vicious crime or scandal, finds his name on the page of the paper and on the lips of men and women everywhere. These are those who "have their day and cease to be." "In the days of Herod the king . . ." Christ was born in a manger only a few miles from the place where Herod sat at his banquet table and slept in the royal bedchamber.

It does not so much matter whose day this is now. Great men will be forgotten and prominent names be heard no more. The important thing is to do the will of the God who sent forth His Son; for in eternity He knoweth them that are His and He never forgets the name of the humblest of His own.

Alone I walked the ocean strand;

A pearly shell was in my hand:

I stooped and wrote upon the sand My name-the year-the day.

As onward from the spot I passed,

One lingering look behind I cast;

A wave came rolling high and fast, And washed my lines away.

And so, methought, 'twill shortly be

With every mark on earth from me:

A wave of dark oblivion's sea

Will sweep across the place

Where I have trod the sandy shore

Of time, and been, to be no more,

Of me-my day-the name I bore,

To leave no track nor trace.

And yet, with Him who counts the sands

And holds the waters in His hands,

I know a lasting record stands

Inscribed against my name, Of all this mortal part has wrought,

Of all this thinking soul has thought,

And from these fleeting moments caught

For glory or for shame.

-Hannah Flagg Gould

* * *

HOPE OF GLORY

"In the beginning God . . ." Thus the book of Genesis begins. "A coffin in Egypt." Thus it ends. What a contrast! Here we are reminded of the destructive power of sin, for the God who was in the beginning had created a beautiful world, planted a lovely garden and made man and put him in the garden. But sin entered and death by sin. All Adam's children had in them from that day the seed of death. So, appropriately the book of beginnings closes with a mournful tribute to the power of sin over human flesh, for "in Adam all die."

But the coffin in Egypt is a reminder of happier things as well. It speaks of faith. Joseph believed that God was going to do the things which He had promised-that He would give Israel the rich and lovely land east and north of Egypt. He believed it so firmly that he gave orders for his body to be embalmed after the Egyptian fashion and placed in a coffin that it might be in readiness to be taken by his people in the time when God should fulfill His promise.

Joseph had done his job well in Egypt. He had received honors and fame, but he had a hope of glory more lasting than that which had been his during his life time. That hope was of a time when God should make of His children a great nation. Though he had been honored in Egypt and ruled there under Pharaoh's appointment, he remembered his heritage in Canaan. The Egyptian coffin in its temporary resting place in the land of Goshen spoke of this hope.

For three hundred years it rested in Egypt, but there came a day when Israel began her long march toward the land which God had promised her and when that day came the mummified body of Joseph went along. The carved Egyptian coffin did not remain in Egypt but came at last to rest in the cave of Machpelah with the dust of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When Israel, of the Lord beloved,

Out from the land of bondage came, Her fathers' God before her moved,

An awful guide, in smoke and flame.

By day, along the astonished lands The cloudy pillar glided slow;

By night, Arabia's crimsoned sands Returned the fiery column's glow.

Thus present still, though now unseen, When brightly shines the prosperous day, Be thoughts of Thee a cloudy screen,

To temper the deceitful ray.

And O, when gathers on our path,

In shade and storm, the frequent night, Be Thou, long-suffering, slow to wrath,

A burning and a shining light.

- Walter Scott

* * *

SUNSET Have you ever noticed that often on a day which had been dark and stormy, on one of those gloomy days when the sun has not shown its face since early morning, the descending sun will pierce through the clouds? Suddenly everything becomes bright and golden and the clouds which have been dark and gray look like red velvet fringed with gold. All the western sky becomes a luminous picture. Glowing landscapes, vistas of fiery seas and purple mountains are painted in the heavens by the brush of flame in the hand of the dying sun. This is a perfect example from nature of these words from Zechariah 14:7 : "At evening time it shall be light."

There is many a Christian whose life has been like such a day. Over his head has passed one dark cloud of sorrow after another. Life's day has been made gloomy by trials and difficulties. There have been storms of danger and winds of suffering and blinding showers of grief. Loneliness and disappointment have been his companions through the day.

But, with the evening of life comes light and glory. The very clouds which darkened his day become the background upon which radiance can play in flaming beauty and glowing color. Old age for God's child may become the richest and most blessed time of life.

An old man once said to a preacher, "I am a happy man for I have lived for Christ. The devil has no happy old men."

The very elements which have made the day dark and stormy can become the background for the beauty of the sunset. But out of the sorrows and tribulations of life God brings beauty and radiance with the peace and fulfillment of old age. The temptations of youth and the strife of middle life are forgotten when God gives light at evening time.

Say not the struggle naught availeth,

The labor and the wounds are vain, The enemy faints not, nor faileth,

And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;

It may be in yon smoke concealed,

Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers, And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,

Seem here no painful inch to gain, Far back, through creeks and inlets making,

Comes silent, flooding in, the main. And not by eastern windows only, When daylight comes, comes in the light; In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,

But westward, look, the land is bright.

- Arthur Hugh Clough

02.07. He Shall Direct Thy Paths

“He Shall Direct Thy Paths”

MARCHING ORDERS

CHAPTER SEVEN

How much tragedy can be crowded into one sentence, and how frequently the Bible thus records a wasted opportunity or a life of failure. Such a sentence is that with which the eleventh chapter of Genesis closes: “Terah died in Haran” (Genesis 11:32).

To understand the failure in the life of Terah, one must look at the preceding verse where we are told that Terah went forth with Abraham and Lot and Sarai “from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.” God had a place of blessing and of promise for Terah in the land of Canaan. He left Ur to set out for the place where God wanted him, but he never got there. They left Ur “to go into . . . Canaan,” but they stopped on the way. Terah’s grave was not in the Land of Promise, but on the way there. He is the man who started and never arrived—the man who was satisfied to stop part way.

Every age has seen its Terahs, men who started out in the purpose of God to do His will, who followed Him for a while and then were content to stop and rest. There have been in every generation men called of God to a place of great blessing and service who never reached it because they were unwilling to go all the way with God. Such a life is always a fruitless, useless one; and such a destiny is always tragic. There is nothing sadder than a grave in Haran, when God had planned a Land of Promise and a place of wide blessing instead.

But in one sense, Terah’s death was a blessing; for after Terah had died in Haran, Abraham followed God into the land of Canaan. The tragedy of Terah is not only that he missed the place of blessing himself, but also that he held Abraham back for so many years. The man who fails to go along with God often not only deprives himself of blessing, but also keeps others from the Land of Promise, too. Sometimes a death in Haran is necessary, if another man whom God has chosen is not himself to be turned aside and stopped part way.

Leave God to order all thy ways,

And hope in Him whate’er betide;

Thou’ it find Him, in the evil days,

Thine all-sufficient Strength and Guide. Who trusts in God’s unchanging love Builds on the Rock that naught can move!

Only thy restless heart keep still,

And wait in cheerful hope, content To take whate’er His gracious will,

His all-discerning love hath sent, Nor doubt our inmost wants are known
To Him who chose us for His own.

He knows when joyful hours are best,

He sends them as He sees it meet, When thou hast borne the fiery test,

And now art freed from all deceit, He comes to thee all unaware, And makes thee own His loving care.

Sing, pray and swerve not from His ways; But do thine own part faithfully.

Trust His rich promises of grace, So shall they be fulfilled in thee.

God never yet forsook at need

The soul that trusted Him indeed.

- George Neumark

(Translated by Catherine Winkworth)

* * * HIS BEST

God has a personal and individual plan for each life. God's plan for one life is different from His plan for another. So often we make the mistake of attempting to judge God's dealings with us on the basis of His dealings with somebody else and we feel disappointed because God has not dealt with us in spiritual things just as He dealt with someone we know or with some character in the Bible.

The Apostle Paul had a strange and dramatic conversion. Many men and women as they come into a saving knowledge of Christ have a very quiet experience. They are not for that reason any less born again than was Paul.

It is a good thing that God does not deal with everybody in exactly the same fashion for we all have different temperaments and different dispositions and God deals with each individual on the basis of what is best for him. God certainly does not expect us to be all alike. Why should we expect Him to deal with us all in the same fashion?

Just before Elijah was taken up in the chariot of fire he asked Elisha: "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee" (2 Kings 2:9), and Elisha answered: "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." That was a good prayer. He did not ask for Elijah's style of preaching. He did not ask for Elijah's disposition and temperament. He did not even ask for Elijah's power. He asked for a double portion of the Spirit.

God gives to each of us the gifts which we shall need in the place of service God has for us.

Elijah was dominated by the Spirit of God and that Spirit took Elijah's gifts and used them powerfully. That same Spirit took Elisha's gifts, different as they were, and used them no less powerfully.

As Christians we should seek to be rich in divine grace and humbly obedient to God. We should not seek to imitate someone else in personality or in temperament, however godly he may be. We should seek the guidance and the power of God's Spirit for our own lives and trust Him to deal with each of us in the way that is best for us. My God, my Father, while I stray

Far from my home, on life's rough way,

O teach me from my heart to say,

"Thy will be done!"

Though dark my path, and sad my lot,

Let me be still and murmur not,

But breathe the prayer divinely taught,

"Thy will be done!"

Renew my will from day to day;

Blend it with Thine, and take away

All that now makes it hard to say,

"Thy will be done!"

- Charlotte Elliott

* * * "THE LORD LED ME" That divine guidance is provided for those who meet God's conditions is one of the most apparent truths in the Word of God. We are plainly told, however, that there are certain conditions which must be met if we are to receive it.

When the servant of Abraham was sent to Haran to find a wife for Isaac, he had no way of knowing which woman was God's choice as a wife for his master's son. He, therefore, put the matter in the Lord's hands and was divinely led. As he himself afterward put it: "I being in the way, the Lord led me . . ." (Genesis 24:27).

If we are to expect divine guidance, we must put ourselves in the place where we have a right to expect it.

- No man has a claim on the guidance of God's Spirit who is not by faith a child of God. He must desire to do God's will.

- He has no right to ask God for guidance unless he expects to follow where He leads.

- He has no right to ask God for leading tomorrow unless he is willing today to do His apparent and revealed will and perform the duties now put upon him.

This, then, is the way in which we may meet God's conditions for guidance:

First, we are to ask for it. God's Word says: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

Then we are to expect guidance. "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass" (Psalms 37:5). This is a promise that He will guide if we believe. Therefore, we are to expect it.

The third qualification which we must meet is that of acceptance and obedience to His will. We mock God when we ask Him to direct us and then refuse to follow the path which He chooses and shows us.

If we are not conscious day by day of God's divine leading in our individual lives, it is our fault, not His. If we, like the prophet's servant, are in the way, we can say with him, "The Lord led me . . .!"

Commit thou all thy griefs

And ways into His hands,

To His sure trust and tender care

Who earth and heaven commands;

Who points the clouds their course,

Whom winds and seas obey,

He shall direct thy wandering feet,

He shall prepare thy way.

No profit canst thou gain

By self-consuming care;

To Him commend thy cause;

His ear Attends the softest prayer.

Thy everlasting truth, Father, Thy ceaseless love,

Sees all Thy children's wants, and knows

What best for each will prove.

Thou everywhere hast sway,

And all things serve Thy might;

Thy every act pure blessing is,

Thy path unsullied light.

- Paul Gerhardt

(Translated by John Wesley)

* * * FASHION OR FELLOWSHIP

It is possible, whatever the popular trends of the day may be, for a man to follow God and not the fashion. This is what Enoch did. The antediluvian world was full of sin and corruption. Society was corrupt and debased. Iniquity abounded, yet in the midst of all the rampant evil “Enoch walked with God . . .” (Genesis 5:22). He went the way that God was going. Therefore he had fellowship with God.

No man can fellowship with the Most High unless he goes along with Him. The secret of the Christian's fellowship with other Christians is found here, also, for “if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Walking with God we find ourselves in good company, for the best men travel with us, for they, too, walk with Him.

God said to Abraham: “Walk before me . . .” (Genesis 17:1).

As fellowship is found in walking with God, so strength is found in walking before Him.

To walk before God means to live consistently; desiring to please Him and to retain in one's mind the conscious knowledge that one is always in His presence.

The man who walks before God realizes that God's eye is upon Him. He says, “Thou God seest me.” Strength abounds in this continuing consciousness. As the servant is careful of the quality of his service when the master is watching him, as the laborer is thorough under the eye of the foreman, as the student is diligent in the presence of his teacher, so is the man conscientious who walks before the Lord.

The Christian, like king Jotham of old, becomes mighty when he prepares his ways before the Lord his God (2 Chronicles 27:6).

Rise, O my soul, pursue the path
By ancient worthies trod;

Aspiring, view those holy men
Who lived and walked with God.

Though dead, they speak in reason's ear,
And in example live;

Their faith and hope and mighty deeds
Still fresh instruction give.

'Twas through the Lamb's most precious blood
They conquered every foe;

And to His power and matchless grace
Their crowns of life they owe.

Lord, may I ever keep in view
The patterns Thou hast given,

And ne'er forsake the blessed road
That led them safe to heaven.

- John Needham

* * * HIS SWEET WILL

God never asks a man to give up something without giving to him something better in return. God called upon Abraham to leave his country and his kindred and his father's house. God asked this man of prominence and of wealth to turn his back on the friends of his childhood and the home of his youth and follow Him without knowing where he was to be led, and by faith Abraham obeyed

and “went out, not knowing whither he went” (Hebrews 11:8).

- Because he was willing to give up the fellowship of the moon worshippers of Ur, he enjoyed the companionship of God.

- Because he was willing to leave the land of his parents, God gave to him, for himself and for his children, the Land of Promise.

- Because he thought more of doing the will of God than abiding in ease in Ur, he became the father of the faithful, the one from whose seed the Messiah came.

Abraham was blessed in his obedience and became a blessing to others as he obeyed.

The man who chooses to do the will of God and who obeys the command of the Lord is always blessed himself and is always a blessing to others. He becomes the instrument through which God’s blessing can be poured out and he is made joyful in being thus used.

There is more happiness in being a missionary than in being a millionaire if one is a missionary in obedience to the will of God and the other a millionaire because he failed to obey the God who wanted him to be a missionary. God’s call is always to self-denial and self-restraint. God’s call is sometimes to privation and suffering.

Privation and suffering in the will of God, with the blessing of His abiding presence and in the light of His face, brings a thousand times more joy and contentment and peace than can be found in the accumulation of wealth and a life of ease out of the will of God.

The child of God in the will of His Father finds joy and contentment not only here, but also hereafter. The pleasures of the world and its treasures pass away but “He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 John 2:17). Abraham “sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:9-10).

I have no cares, O blessed Will, For all my cares are Thine;

I live in triumph, Lord, for Thou Hast made Thy triumphs mine.

He always wins who sides with God, To him no chance is lost;

God’s will is sweetest to him when It triumphs at his cost.

Ill that He blesses is our good, And unblest good is ill;

And all is right that seems most wrong, If it be His sweet will.

- Frederick W. Faber

* * * “THE EYES OF THE LORD” With the gaze of the divine eye, God sees the deeds of men, whether performed alone and in secret behind a closed door or in the presence of a great company. God sees all that is done both openly in broad daylight, or in solitude and darkness. But God sees more than the deeds of men. The secrets of the thought and the intent and purpose of the heart lie open to His gaze.

He who hid the treasures in the earth and veined the hills with gold, reads the secrets of the minds of men and “the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3).

Though the searching eyes of God are on both the good and evil, He does not gaze upon them both alike. His eyes see the evil that evil may be judged. God looks upon the good that He may bless. We are told that “the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him . . .” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

God looks upon the man whose heart is perfect toward Him that He may, when He sees a special need in that man’s life, meet and supply it; that when moments of weakness come He may be there to uphold and strengthen; that when sorrow comes He may be present to comfort and sustain.

To the righteous man God makes this promise: “I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psalms 32:8).

God’s all-seeing eye, which can gaze through the darkness of midnight and which can see the end from the beginning, God’s eye which pierces the unrevealed future, is the eye that guides God’s child. Modern science has developed instruments which can send a ray through fog, clouds or darkness and pick up any object concealed there. So God’s eye sees things hidden from our sight. As an airplane flying in the midst of heavy fog is led to the airport by the radio beam, so is the man who in faith relies upon the wisdom and power of God guided safely by a divine eye.

How gentle God’s commands!

How kind His precepts are!

Come, cast your burdens on the Lord,

And trust His constant care.

Beneath His watchful eye His saints securely dwell;

That hand which bears all nature up Shall guard His children well.

Why should this anxious load Press down your weary mind?

Haste to your heavenly Father’s throne, And sweet refreshment find.

His goodness stands approved, Unchanged from day to day:

I’ll drop my burden at His feet, And bear a song away.

- Philip Doddridge

* * * THE INWARD LOOK

Men form their opinions of us on the basis of what they see us do and what they hear us say. The impressions which are made by the outward appearances are the only means by which they can judge, for “man looketh on the outward appearance.” God, on the other hand, “Looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

Jesus Christ, who was God in the flesh, expressed the mind of God in regard to sin when He said: "Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22). He also said. "Who soever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1 John 3:15). "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

What the Saviour is teaching here is this: that it is an attitude of the heart toward a thing which shapes the character of the man. There is many a man who because he hates another would like to kill him, but who is restrained from killing by fear of the consequences or by social training. In God's sight that man is a murderer.

On the same basis of heart attitude God judges the matter of surrender to His will. God demands of every Christian absolute obedience and a heart which is perfect toward Him. God may never ask you as His child to go to the mission field, but if you are an obedient child, in your heart you would be willing to go if He would ask you. God may never ask you to turn your back on father and mother and wife and child and lands for His name's sake, but no man can claim to be completely yielded to the will of God unless in his heart he loves Him more than all these and unless he is willing to forsake them, should God's will for his life require it.

O Thou, to whose all searching sight
The darkness shineth as the light,
Search, prove my heart, it pants for Thee;
O burst these bonds, and set it free!
Saviour, where'er Thy steps I see,
Dauntless, untired, I follow Thee;
O let Thy hand support me still,
And lead me to Thy holy hill.
If rough and thorny be the way,
My strength proportion to my day;
Till toil and grief and pain shall cease,
Where all is calm and joy and peace.

- Nicolaus L. von Zinzendorf

(Translated by John Wesley)

* * * HIS OWN The voice of God came in the night to the child Samuel, calling his name. Thinking it was the voice of Eli the priest, his master, Samuel ran to the old man, saying, "Here am I" (1 Samuel 3:5). "I called not . . . lie down again," said Eli.

Three times the Lord called, and three times Samuel went to Eli. The fourth time, following the instruction of the priest who knew it was God's voice the lad was hearing, Samuel said, "Speak; for thy servant heareth."

The Lord knew Samuel's name. Samuel had been given by God to a praying mother who had asked God for a son. He was God's lad, dedicated to His service. God always knows His own by name.

Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, speaking to His disciples a parable about a shepherd, said, "He calleth his own sheep by name . . ." (John 10:13). No harm can reach the sheep under the protection of their shepherd; no man can pluck them from his care; but, best of all, he knows them each by name.

The grief-stricken woman beside the empty tomb, thinking Him the gardener, said, "Tell me where thou hast laid him . . ." (John 20:15). He calls her name, "Mary," and she recognizes her Risen Lord in the sound of His voice speaking her name.

The doubting disciple refuses to believe the truth of the Resurrection until he beholds and handles the living Lord. The voice of the Saviour invites him by name, "Thomas, Reach hither thy finger . . . and reach hither thy hand . . ." 1 (John 20:27), and his doubts are laid at rest.

The disciple whose heart is heavy with the sin of his denial stands in the mists of early morning on the beach as the Lord questions him three times by name: "Simon . . . lovest thou me?" (John 21:16), and fellowship between the disciple and His Master is reestablished as Simon Peter responds with profession of his love.

He knows His own by name. He is intimately acquainted with each individual. He knows the fears and the sorrows of each. He speaks to the listening heart. He calls each one by name. "And the sheep follow him: for they know his voice" (John 10:4).

Jesus, let Thy pitying eye
Call back a wandering sheep;

False to Thee, like Peter, I
Would fain, like Peter, weep.

Let me be by grace restored;
On me be all long-suffering shown;

Turn, and look upon me, Lord,
And break my heart of stone.

Look, as when Thy languid eye
Was closed that we might live;

"Father," at the point to die

My Saviour prayed, "Forgive!"

Surely, with that dying word,
He turns, and looks, and cries, "'Tis done!"

O my bleeding, loving Lord,
Thou break'st my heart of stone!

- Charles Wesley

* * *

PEACE OF GOD

“Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace” (Job 22:21).

With these words Eliphaz sought to comfort and encourage Job as he sat, bowed down with grief and afflicted with boils, penniless and heavyhearted. No doubt Eliphaz thought himself very well acquainted with God, but Job knew Him a thousand times more intimately.

As far as the accuracy of his own philosophy was concerned, Eliphaz was speaking only a fine bombastic phrase, but there is a truth in his words of which he himself never dreamed, for to his way of thinking, as he told Job in the next sentence, this acquaintanceship with God meant that he should have “plenty of silver.” Acquaintanceship with God means more than Job’s self-satisfied friend ever dreamed of, and there is a peace which comes from knowing Him which Eliphaz had not attained.

One may become acquainted with God in His fullness only through contact with the Lord Jesus Christ, for He who is the Son of God declares:

- “I and my Father are one,”
- “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father,”
- “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

Christ is God and the Revealer of God. Since God is love, we can best come to know Him in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the manifestation of God’s love for us. The more intimately our lives become involved with Him the more intimately we come to know God.

Knowing Him we are at peace, for He said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

We have peace with God when we have accepted Him as our Saviour who has borne our sins and who has “broken down the middle wall of partition between us” and God (Ephesians 2:14).

We have the peace of God which is based upon this confidence: that the God who loved us enough to send His Son to die for us will order our steps and meet our needs.

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?

The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?

To do the will of Jesus-this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?

On Jesus’ bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?

In Jesus’ keeping we are safe, and they.

Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?

Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?

Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,

And Jesus calls us to heaven's perfect peace.

- Edward H. Bickersteth

* * * GIANTS IN THE EARTH The Bible has very little to say about antediluvian civilization. Of that world before the flood we actually know very little. However, there are certain evidences that there was a degree of civilization. We are told of Jabal and Jubal and Tubalcain. One was a man who dwelt in tents and kept cattle and was the father of all such as dwelt in this fashion and followed this occupation. Another was the father of skillful artisans in brass and iron (Genesis 4:20-22). Enoch built a city.

Certainly, therefore, there was developed agriculture and city life with attendant trade and business. The art of music and the art of metalworking indicate a high degree of culture. Ornaments craftily devised bespeak a development of art. The use of iron, of itself, indicates some progress in implements of peace and of war. But they were unable to build a culture which could last.

The book of Genesis tells us that "there were giants in the earth in those days" (Genesis 6:4).

I think perhaps this means more than merely giants in size. There were possibly also those who were giants in intellectuality and in knowledge. But God sent a flood to destroy their civilization, because hand in hand with skill and culture and wisdom went corruption and degeneracy and decay.

The highest cultures have always been the most corrupt. The most advanced periods of architecture and art and music have been the periods of the most apparent degeneracy and depravity. God has destroyed many civilizations and cultures since that in the early days of the human race for the same reason that He sent a flood to destroy all flesh upon the earth in the time of Noah-because the evil in man's heart was great, and all the "imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Certainly we should not disparage culture and artistic achievement, but these apart from growth in spiritual matters, fear of the Lord and reverence for the God who made heaven and earth, have little value. Certainly, we should seek in these days to develop skillful men, clever men, scholars, artists and statesmen.

This is a day when there are few giants in the earth. We need great men, but great men and great culture never solve the problem of life and put an end to human suffering and sin. Our need in this day is to learn that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10).

Giants in the earth, without God dwelling in their hearts by faith, can bring calamity and destruction to a world. What we must have is not only the outward culture which comes from the development of skills and from physical and mental training but also culture of the soul and civilization of the heart. These come through reverence for God, obedience to His commands, and a desire to do His will. The more complicated our civilization becomes, the more we need Jesus Christ. But few among the carnal wise, But few of noble race, Obtain the favor of Thine eyes, Almighty King of grace.

He takes the men of meanest name For sons and heirs of God;

And thus He pours abundant shame On honorable blood.

He calls the fool, and makes him know The mysteries of His grace,

To bring aspiring wisdom low, And all its pride abase.

Nature has all its glories lost

When brought before His throne; No flesh shall in His presence boast

But in the Lord alone.

- Isaac Watts

* * * "EVEN UNTO DEATH"

Obedience to the will of God sometimes means suffering, but it is never suffering like that which the Saviour endured for us upon the Cross. No anguish can compare with His, for He suffered physical pain and at the same time bore the suffering of all lost souls in hell. The penalty of our sins was placed upon Him and He bore that along with physical torment.

Though we cannot suffer as He did, the one who follows Christ must sometimes walk a lonely and rough pathway. He who would do the will of God must bear a cross. Our Lord plainly stated this when He said "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

Our physical nature revolts at the thought of suffering. A normal man will, when he can, turn aside from pain, but to do God's will costs some men physical suffering. Christians have been fed to wild beasts, burned at the stake, beheaded. To do God's will may not mean physical anguish for us, but there is a pain which can be even greater, that is pain of the heart and of the mind.

To do the will of God may mean turning our back on all we love and going alone to the place of God's appointment for us. To follow Christ may mean separation from that which we cherish most, a turning away from that which is dearest to our own heart. It means turning aside from that which we would choose, to that which God chooses for us.

No man can truly claim to be obedient to God until he, like the Saviour, is willing to be obedient even unto death. Anything which stops short of that sort of obedience is not obedience. What would you think of a soldier who refused to obey a command because his obedience might result in his death? If obedience "even unto death" is naturally expected of a good soldier, is such obedience not necessary if one would be perfect in his obedience to God?

“Take up thy Cross,” the Saviour said, “If thou wouldst my disciple be;

Deny thyself, the world forsake, And humbly follow after Me.”

Take up thy cross, nor heed the shame; Nor let thy foolish pride rebel;

Thy Lord for thee the Cross endured, To save thy soul from death and hell.

Take up thy cross, and follow Christ; Nor think till death to lay it down;

For only he who bears the Cross May hope to wear the glorious crown.

- Charles W. Everest

* * * REST IN THE LORD

Ours is a tired generation. Men are physically exhausted and mentally worn out. I recently read a magazine article which offered suggestions as to how we might beat fatigue. The author suggested that to overcome physical exhaustion, we must learn to relax and to use only muscles which are needed for the job at hand. To conquer mental fatigue, the author's suggestion was that we should not dwell too long on any single problem but should shift from one mental task to another frequently, and that when we get into bed at night, we should dismiss altogether from our minds the responsibilities and worries of the day.

All that sounds like good advice, but there is one sort of fatigue which the author did not mention, spiritual fatigue-soul exhaustion. This comes from the burden of sin which men bear, from guilty consciences which prick and sting us.

God's Word offers a wise solution for all three types of exhaustion, wiser indeed than any psychologist can ever devise or recommend. Jesus Christ says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29). He takes away the guilt and burden of sin. Coming to Him, we find our hearts and souls cleansed; and having the guilt of sin removed, the burden of the conscience is lifted. No one else but Jesus Christ can do this for men.

He also removes mental fatigue. When every thought is brought into captivity to the Lord Jesus, we no longer feel the necessity of solving our problems alone. We cast all our cares upon Him, knowing that He cares for us and that His wisdom is as strong as His love. He says: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not” (James 1:5). Knowing that we have wisdom which comes down from above, we no longer bear the mental strain of solving problems purely in the strength of our own intellect. Knowing that He plans our tomorrows, we are no longer forced to burden ourselves with worry about tomorrow.

Physically, we find rest in Him. The man whose life is yielded to the Lord Jesus Christ finds in Him freedom from old habits of life, freedom from the bondage of old sins which take their toll of physical strength. He no longer exhausts himself in the ceaseless round of useless activity and a vain search for fleeting pleasures.

After all, the mind and soul and body are interrelated. Bearing guilt and worry, the body shows the strain of this burden of conscience or mind. Nervous tensions develop, and physically we become exhausted through the strain of a guilty heart. Sin, though a thing of the heart, can thus affect the body. Bearing mental burdens, we feel physical exhaustion. Where else can rest be found, then, save in the One who is the God of all?

Here is the secret of relaxation and refreshing: "Rest in the Lord . . ." (Psalms 37:7).

Obedying this command and accepting this invitation, we find, indeed, that our "youth is renewed like the eagle's" (Psalms 103:5). The Gospel is good medicine, better far than any vitamin capsules, and the surrendered way of life is a path of pleasure and a road of peace and rest.

Come unto Me, when shadows darkly gather,

When the sad heart is weary and distressed, Seeking for comfort from your heavenly Father,

Come unto me, and I will give you rest.

Large are the mansions in thy Father's dwelling,

Glad are the homes that sorrows never dim;

Sweet are the harps in holy music swelling,

Soft are the tones which raise the heavenly hymn.

There, like an Eden blossoming in gladness, Bloom the fair flowers the earth too rudely pressed;

Come unto Me, all ye who droop in sadness,

Come unto Me, and I will give you rest - Catherine H. Esling

* * * "FOLLOW THOU ME"

"What shall this man do?" (John 21:21).

This is the question which Peter asked Jesus about John. Christ had revealed to Peter that when he became an old man he would be led out and put to death for the sake of the Gospel. Peter, turning around, saw John approaching and asked the question about the Lord's plan for the life of the other and younger disciple. The answer which Christ gave to his question is worth our attention. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" (John 21:23).

Peter's responsibility was not to be concerned about John and his relationship with the Lord but about his own personal obedience. It was Peter's duty to follow Christ and preach the Gospel wherever he might be sent. It was his obligation to live for his Lord day by day until the time came when he should die for Him.

Christ, on the other hand, had a different plan for John. He was to stay in Jerusalem to administer the affairs of the local church there and finally be sent by a Roman order to the Isle of Patmos where as an old man he was to receive the vision of the Revelation.

The Master wanted Peter to have the thrill of the experience of a missionary ministry and to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles and to go home by way of a martyr's death. The Master wanted John to

catch a vision of the end times that he might set it down for countless generations yet unborn to read.

Peter's responsibility was to go out and preach and die. John's responsibility was to tarry at Jerusalem and later to set down the Revelation from his exile at Patmos.

The plan of our Lord is not the same for every life. "Follow thou Me!"

The only thing God asks of His children is to be willing day by day to do His will. God does not ask the Christian to be a successful man or a brilliant man. God simply asks him to do daily, joyfully and obediently the thing which he gives him to do that day.

Obedience is better than sacrifice, and the man who will be a great success in the will of God twenty years from now, is the man who today is obedient to God's will for his life in little things.

How shall I follow Him I serve?

How shall I copy Him I love?

Nor from those blessed footsteps swerve, Which lead me to His seat above?

Lord, should my path through suffering lie,

Forbid it I should e'er repine;

Still let me turn to Calvary, Nor heed my griefs, remembering Thine.

O let me think how Thou didst leave

Untasted every pure delight,

To fast, to faint, to watch, to grieve,

The toilsome day, the homeless night:-

To faint, to grieve, to die for me!

Thou camest not Thyself to please:

And, dear as earthly comforts be,

Shall I not love Thee more than these?

Yes! I would count them all but loss,

To gain the notice of Thine eye:

Flesh shrinks and trembles at the cross,

But Thou canst give the victory.

- Joseph Cornier

* * *

SHORT OF SIGHT

It is not enough to know facts. A wise man must know how to use facts. Men knew of the existence of the atom long before they knew how to make use of atomic force to defeat their enemies in time of war. Thinking men must realize that the world is in pretty much of a mess. Only a man who chooses to shut his eyes in willful blindness can fail to admit the existence of the problems which face all nations, but there is a decided disagreement about what should be done to solve the problems.

King David was more fortunate than the heads of modern states, for we are told in 1 Chronicles 12:32, that David's followers included two hundred men "that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do."

The world is full of men who understand the times to the extent that they realize they are trying and hazardous and alarming, but how scarce are men who know what nations ought to do about the problems mankind faces!

The seed of the next war is usually planted in the peace treaty of the last. The tragedies which have their ugly birth tomorrow are conceived in the mistakes of today. To know what we ought to do, we need understanding of the times, both of ours, and of our children's. Except for the seer and the prophet, rare in every generation, men have been short of sight.

The path of God's will is the only road which leads to the solution of the world's problem, for only the Eternal God sees tomorrow's dangers today. When Christ shall come to reign, He will bring peace to the earth because He knows what must be done to insure peace, and He is able to do it.

The only measure of concord and the only approach to a permanent solution of human problems which we can discover now, comes as we seek His will to perform it. The Lord our God is clothed with might, The winds obey His will;

He speaks, and in His heavenly height, The rolling sun stands still.

Rebel, ye waves, and o'er the land With threatening aspect roar;

The Lord uplifts His awful hand, And chains you to the shore. His voice sublime is heard afar; In distant peals it dies;

He yokes the whirlwind to His car,

And sweeps the howling skies.

Ye nations, bend, in reverence bend;

Ye monarchs, wait His nod;

And bid the choral song ascend

To celebrate our God.

- H. Kirke White

* * * A WISE CHOICE Of all the wonderful incidents set down in the Old Testament, none is more interesting than the account of Solomon's wise choice.

God appeared unto the young king in a dream, saying: "Ask what I shall give thee" (1 Kings 3:5). Solomon, conscious of his own youth and inexperience and feeling deeply the heavy responsibility of kingship, replied, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad" (1 Kings 3:9). The Lord, pleased that he had not asked for riches or long life or the death of his enemies, gave him "a wise and an understanding heart."

It is well enough to be wise of head, to be able to think through problems and find their solutions and to make accurate decisions; but there is a wisdom deeper than the purely intellectual, that is, wisdom of the heart. The man who is wise of heart will usually find himself wise of head also, but many intellectual giants know nothing of the more important kind of wisdom. Wisdom which is purely of the intellect is cold. That which is of the heart is warm.

Those who need help with the problems of life will not be drawn to the man who is coldly clever, but rather to the warm and understanding heart. The man who possesses such a heart is able to enter into the joys and sorrows of others.

He is able to feel with them. He is able to understand their difficulties and see life from their point of view. When the heart is not only understanding but also wise, its possessor is richly endowed.

That Solomon received the gift for which he asked is very evident. Two women living in the same house had infants about the same age. One child died in the night and each woman claimed the live child. The king of the wise heart ordered the live child to be cut asunder with a sword and divided between them. One woman consented to this procedure. The other protested against the death of the child, preferring to see it given to the other claimant. The understanding heart of the king recognized in the attitude of the second woman the evidence of a mother's love and ordered the child given to her.

The world is cursed today by a lack of wise and understanding hearts.

We are attempting to solve the problems of the world without an understanding of the heart of the world and with a wisdom of the intellect alone. The decisions of the mind are based all too often on outward appearance. The understanding heart perceives the hidden truth beneath the surface. The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed, If Thou the spirit give by which I pray; My unassisted heart is barren clay,

Which of its native self can nothing feed;

Of good and pious work Thou art the seed Which quickens where Thou say'st it may;

Unless Thou show us when Thine own true way,

No man can find it! Father, Thou must lead!

Do Thou, then, breathe those thoughts into my mind By which such virtue may in me be bred That in Thy holy footsteps I may tread:

The fetters of my tongue do Thou unbind, That I may have the power to sing of Thee And sound Thy praises everlastingly.

- Michelangelo Buonarotti (Translated by William Wordsworth)

02.08. With Good Will Doing Service

“With Good Will Doing Service”

A SHINING LIGHT

CHAPTER EIGHT A light may burn and not shine. If it is shut up in a closet, none may be aware that the light is burning, because it does not shine out. It is not only important to keep the light of a lighthouse burning, but also to keep the lenses polished and cleansed so the light can shine out across the water.

It is possible that a man may have the light of God’s eternal life burning within him, and the light in his life be of little value in a dark world because the light is not shining. Sometimes clouds of sin can cut off the glow. Again, a man may so shut his testimony for Christ away that the light is all closed up as in a closet.

The Lord Jesus used the illustration of the shining light when He said: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Naturally, there can be no shining where there is no light. A man must have the light of God, found through faith in Jesus Christ, burning within himself, if there is to be any light shining out from his life. But it is not enough to have the light there. The light should be so displayed that its brilliance casts rays out into the darkness of a needy, sinful world about him. The light, our Lord tells us, is not to be hidden under a bushel, but is to be placed on a stand where it can give light to all in the house (Luke 11:33).

If a Christian is to be of any value to his Lord in the world, there must be a cleanness of life, a freedom from sin and selfishness which may dim his testimony. There must be streaming out from him through good works and unassumed love for needy men the evidence of his having been ignited within by his contact with Jesus Christ, who is the Light of the World.

The purpose of a beacon is not only to give warning of danger but also to point to safety. The revolving beacons of the airways indicate to the pilot that he is on his course and point him toward his destination, toward the airfield and toward safety. And so the Christian in the world is to point men to Christ as their hope and safety. It is very important that the light be not only burning, but also shining.

Stars are of mighty use: the night is dark and long

The road foal-and where one goes right,

Six may go wrong.

One twinkling ray

Shot o'er some cloud,

May clear much way and guide a crowd.

God's saints are shining lights: who stays Here long, must pass

O'er hills, swift streams, and steep ways As smooth as glass; But these, all night, Like candles,
shed Their beams, and light

Us into bed.

- Henry Vaughan

* * * **BROKEN FOR BLESSING** Not long ago I went into a shop which specialized in antique china and glassware. On all the walls were signs: Please Do Not Handle, Hands Off. In letters larger and blacker than any others, one sign warned, What You Break, You Buy. Naturally, there were reasons for those signs. That china and that ancient glassware had value until it was broken.

But some things have value when they are broken.

- The ground is broken by the plow.

- The seed, buried in the warm, damp soil, is broken as the germ of life inside tears through the shell.

- The aspiring sprouts burst through the sod. The grain appears on the stalk, and the stalks are cut and broken.

- The grain is crushed and ground. From the flour bread is made.

-The loaf is broken by the knife in order that men may eat. How many breakings go into every slice of bread!

- The meat which comes to our table costs the breaking of the life and body of the animal upon whom we feed.

- The tree in the forest or on the hillside becomes useful to men, not while it is whole, but when it has been torn apart by the saws that men may use the boards taken from the tree.

- The hills are broken open that men may take out the treasure of mineral wealth, of iron and gold, of coal and of silver.

- The thirsty people of Israel drank water from the rock which Moses broke when he smote it at the command of God.

- A hungry multitude in the twilight time were fed from loaves and fishes which God's Son, having blessed, broke; and in the breaking, with His blessing, they were multiplied until the lunch from the basket of one little boy fed thousands.

- A woman came with a lovely vase of alabaster, fragile and delicate, and broke it that she might anoint Him with the oil which it contained; and it was in the breaking of the vase that the fragrance of the perfumed ointment was released and filled the house.

Paul and his fellow voyagers were in a ship, blown before the storm for days; and suddenly the vessel, which was apparently their only hope of safety, struck a reef; and the force of the waves as they beat upon the vessel, trapped by the lurking gray rocks, began to break it to pieces. The Book of Acts tells us that some reached shore on broken parts of the ship (Acts 27:44).

A roof was broken one day that a sick man might be let down to the feet of Jesus to have his sins forgiven and health restored to his poor, disease-racked body.

Our Lord, the Blessed Lamb of God, purchased our salvation when He was broken on the Cross for our redemption. Salvation comes to men, not when in the pride of their own hearts they feel themselves without a need of grace and pardon, but when, broken by a sense of guilt and torn by a feeling of helplessness and sin, they turn to Him. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God," cries the Psalmist, "thou wilt not despise" (Psalms 51:17).

The reference is not to a heart which is broken by sorrows such as the loss of loved ones, but rather to one whose heart has been broken by grief for sin.

From a breaking of the things which we hold dear, a shattering of the things most precious and sometimes apparently most necessary, God brings rich joy and blessing. When His hands snap or tear or shatter, they do so, not in harshness, but in love; and blessing comes with the breaking. A broken heart, my God, my King,

To Thee a sacrifice I bring:

The God of grace will ne'er despise

A broken heart for sacrifice.

My soul lies humbled in the dust,

And owns Thy dreadful sentence just:

Look down, O Lord, with pitying eye,

And save the soul condemned to die.

Then will I teach the world Thy ways;

Sinners shall learn Thy sovereign grace;

I'll lead them to my Saviour's blood,

And they shall praise a pardoning God.

O may Thy love inspire my tongue!

Salvation shall be all my song;

And all my powers shall join to bless

The Lord, my strength and righteousness.

- Isaac Watts

* * * ATHRIST IN THE DESERT

Philip was sensitive to the will of God and obedient to His voice. He had a great evangelistic meeting in Samaria. Many were converted as he preached. Then the angel of the Lord came to Philip, saying, "Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza . . ." (Acts 8:26). Philip obeyed without asking questions. A chariot came by in which sat the treasurer of Ethiopia who had been up to Jerusalem. At the command of the Lord, Philip ran and joined himself to the chariot. Invited to come up and sit, he found the eunuch reading from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and Philip "began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus."

I have always wondered what was the matter with the church in Jerusalem that this hungry-hearted man had not been, reached with the Gospel. As a proselyte to the Jewish faith, he had been in Jerusalem worshipping. There was by this time a very large group of Christians in that city. They had even been sending out missionaries to other places, yet apparently none of the Christians in Jerusalem had touched this Ethiopian for Christ.

How many opportunities the Church still misses! How many hungry souls go without the Bread of Life because Christians fail to speak to them about the Lord. What a contact that Ethiopian was-the keeper of the treasure of the queen, an important personage in the court society of his country! Had he become a Christian, he would be in a position to give an effective testimony in his own land, yet he left Jerusalem unconverted. God had to send a surrendered man down to the desert to lead him to Christ.

The Ethiopian was ready and eager for Philip's message. The Spirit of God had gone before and prepared his heart. God always goes before when He sends His servant on a mission for Him.

God knew the hunger in the heart of the Ethiopian and God sent Philip to bring him the message of salvation. God still uses surrendered men who are willing to trust His wisdom and to go unquestionably where He sends them.

Awake, my soul; stretch every nerve, And press with vigor on:

A heavenly race demands thy zeal,

And an immortal crown.

A cloud of witnesses around

Hold thee in full survey;

Forget the steps already trod,

And onward urge thy way.

'Tis God's all-animating voice That calls thee from on high;

'Tis His own hand presents the prize To thine aspiring eye,-

That prize, with peerless glories bright, Which shall new luster boast

When victors' wreaths and monarchs' gems Shall blend in common dust.

- Philip Doddridge

* * * NEGLECTED OPPORTUNITY On the Cross, Christ, praying for those who crucified Him, cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). The Roman soldiers were simply carrying out the orders issued by the authority it was their duty to obey. It is to be doubted that any of them, nailing God's Son upon the Cross, had even the faintest perception of the meaning of Calvary or the divine person of Christ.

But which of us does not need that same prayer prayed for us!

What sins of ignorance we commit! How blind we are who cannot see the final result of the deed done today! What son, if he could see the broken heart and the white hair on the head of his mother tomorrow, would commit the little act today which adds the first weight to the heart and brings the first gray hair! Who, if he could see the results of the word thoughtlessly spoken today, as it takes root in the heart and brings a crop of bitterness in the life of a loved one tomorrow, would permit the word to pass his lips!

A man today rejects God's grace, heedlessly turns aside from the opportunity of salvation God offers in the Gospel of His Son, not because he intends to go out lost and undone to eternity, but because he is busy or thoughtless. He intends sometime to settle the question of his salvation, but little does he realize that in neglecting this opportunity he neglects the last.

The Christian touches a life and fails to give the Word of the Gospel, and that one may tomorrow or next year and forever be lost because the Christian neglected to speak to him the Word of the Gospel.

We are all guilty of the sin of thoughtlessness-blind to the consequences of our words and deeds, neglectful because we do not realize what the result of our neglect may be. O, Lord, pray for us: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." At the blest mercy seat, Pleading for me,

My feeble faith looks up, Jesus, to Thee;

Help me the cross to bear,

Thy wondrous love declare,

Some song to raise, or prayer, Something for Thee.

Give me a faithful heart, Likeness to Thee,

That each departing day Henceforth may see

Some work of love begun,

Some deed of kindness done,

Some wanderer sought and won, Something for Thee.

All that I am and have, Thy gifts so free,

In joy, in grief, through life, Dear Lord, for Thee!

And when Thy face I see,

My ransomed soul shall be,
Through all eternity, Something for Thee.

- Sylvanus D. Phelps

* * * "BIG" MEN

We hear much talk these days about the scarcity of greatness among the leaders of the nations.

We lament the fact that there are not more "big" men; but the need of the nations is not primarily great men, for a great man of the wrong sort can do great harm. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had the right idea when he suggested to Moses the type men needed for positions of national leadership and government.

This is his advice to Moses:

"Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them . . ." (Exodus 18:21).

"Able men," that is, men who are capable and qualified, not necessarily men of great brilliance or dominant personality, but efficient men who are well qualified for their jobs.

In other words, men are to be picked for offices because of their capabilities rather than to pay off a political debt or a party obligation.

"Such as fear God." That means reverent men who are spiritually minded. Such men will accept their appointment as carrying with it an obligation to discharge its duties in the fear of God and in such fashion as will please Him.

"Men of truth." This is another way of saying, just and honest men, men who seek to do right because they love right, men who execute justice because they love justice. There is no oppression of minorities when this type of states man is in office. There is no feeling of fear on the part of humble men under the governance of such a man.

"Hating covetousness." In other words, unselfish and divorced from self-seeking. This is a rare characteristic among politicians in any nation or generation. Such men, naturally, would not accept bribes themselves, nor would they tolerate personal aggrandizement by others at the expense of the nation's welfare.

Perhaps, after all, we do need "big" men, for only a great man would possess all these qualifications.

I want a principle within, Of jealous, godly fear;

A sensibility of sin, A pain to feel it near:

I want the first approach to feel Of pride, or fond desire;

To catch the wandering of my will, And quench the kindling fire.

From Thee that I no more may part No more Thy goodness grieve,

The filial awe, the fleshly heart, The tender conscience, give.
Quick as the apple of an eye, O God, my conscience make!
Awake my soul when sin is nigh, And keep it still awake.
If to the right or left I stray, That moment, Lord, reprove;
And let me weep my life away For having grieved Thy love.
O may the least omission pain My well-instructed soul,
And drive me to the blood again Which makes the wounded whole!

- Charles Wesley

* * *

LABORS DONE

There is a strange expression used in recounting the death of great men of the Old Testament. It is the phrase, "full of days," or "full of years." Job, David and Jeremiah, the High Priest, the record declares, died "full of days." Abraham and Isaac were said to have come down to death "full of years." The expression means obviously "in ripe old age," but it means more than that. It carries the thought of being fully satisfied with life. The Bible applies it only to righteous men, and it is only such who know the full meaning of satisfaction in life.

It is possible to live well beyond one's allotted three score years and ten and still be greedy for more time to live. Or, on the other hand, a young man disappointed and disillusioned may find the short span of his selfish years more than enough, and, satisfied with the emptiness of vain pleasure, desire the end of it all.

These Old Testament characters, however, died with a feeling of comfortable satisfaction that their years had been full and rich and blessed. Not always perfect, sometimes marred by their sins and scarred by their failures, they were able to look back upon a long stretch of days for the most part usefully spent and divinely ordered. Their cup was full. Their days were complete.

They were ready to go, because they knew that He who had blessed them on the pilgrimage of life would not take them home until their task was completed and the time was come to rest from their labors. His love had been about them all the way and they were satisfied with Him and in Him.

No one can criticize a book until the book is read. No one can fully judge a life until the life is closed. Present prosperity is no indication of a successful or happy life. Only upon the completion of the whole can it be said, "This life was a success."

The best means of assuring true happiness for this life, however, is to make preparation for the life after death.

How blest the righteous when he dies!

When sinks a weary soul to rest,

How mildly beam the closing eyes, How gently heaves th' expiring breast!

So fades a summer cloud away;
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;
So gently shuts the eye of day;
So dies a wave along the shore.
A holy quiet reigns around,
A calm which life nor death destroys;
And naught disturbs that peace profound
Which his unfettered soul enjoys.
Life's labor done, as sinks the day,
Light from its load the spirit flies,
While heaven and earth combine to say,
"How blest the righteous when he dies!"

- Anna L. Barbauld

* * *

HEAVENLY RACE

Self-satisfaction is the great enemy of achievement. A man who feels he has "arrived" has nothing more to live for. Indeed, there is nothing which can so limit a life and reduce it to a dull plane of uselessness as can a feeling of self-complacency; but the worst type of self-satisfaction is not that which men feel when they have reached the peak in business or politics but that which is felt by some in regard to their religious experience. No man can ever sound the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

Yet there are some who, when they come into a certain amount of truth, feel that they have discovered the whole. There are some who, when they have overcome, by the grace of God, certain sins and habits of their lives, feel that they have well-nigh reached perfection. As a matter of fact, the greater the feeling of self-contentment, the lesser the signs of fullness of grace.

Paul never felt that he had attained unto an ideal state of life or that he had sounded the depths and heights of the mysteries of God in His Word. He makes it very plain that he felt a constant state of dissatisfaction with himself, when he says in the third chapter of Philippians, the thirteenth verse: "I count not, myself to have apprehended."

What a pity that some Christian people do not echo the sentence of Paul. Not feeling satisfied, this remarkable man constantly was seeking to press forward.

Had anyone ever had grounds for religious self-satisfaction, it certainly would have been Paul. Yet he to whom the Holy Spirit had revealed so much Truth and whom God had so greatly used was continually seeking newer experience and fuller insight into God's Truth.

This feeling of having attained is one of the things which make for division among God's people.

Having come into what they believe is the truth of some matter of Scriptural interpretation; they do not wish further enlightenment.

If they read the Word of God, it is not to acquire broader horizons, but rather to add further proof to the opinion or interpretation which they have already found completely satisfying; and, it must be admitted, the satisfaction is oftentimes one of the ego rather than one of the heart and soul.

Paul admonishes such as these when he says: "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (Php 3:16).

The rule by which he walked is very clear. It was this: "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" (Php 3:13-14).

Only those who are thus minded can claim to follow in the footsteps of Paul; and being thus minded with him and incessantly seeking new heights, we find that with Paul we truly walk in the light.

Henceforth there must be no more turning back

For me, to things that I have shut my heart

Against, and closed my eyes; I must depart

Old ways, forbidden, and smooth-traveled tracks

My feet have known; as one who silently-

Deliberately-goes out and shuts the door

Behind him, knowing he shall nevermore

Re-enter there, so must there be for me

No turning back;

Old idols that have marred

True worship-torn from God-I now must pass

Unseeing by; when one seeks gold the brass

Should glitter less. Although I may be scarred,

I am not beaten-no, nor yet shall be;

I would not pray strength sufficient for the task-

When Sodom beckons, only this I ask,-

"God, let there be no turning back for me."

- Ruth M. Gibbs

* * *

MODERN GIVING

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” This is the way the last verse of the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians appears in the King James version. Another translation states it this way: “And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Actually, neither translation catches the full meaning of the word, for the Greek word means both charity and love and more than either. It implies a pouring out of oneself in service to another because of a deep and abiding affection for him. It is possibly best exemplified in the relation of a mother to a child. It means actions of goodness springing from a heart of love.

Even our good deeds have become so streamlined in this modern day that all the soul and vitality is gone from our charity. We write a check for the Associated Charities or the Community Chest and feel we have discharged our responsibility. There is no personal contact between the giver and the receiver of the gift. Doubtless there is more efficiency in the modern method, but I wonder if the giver has not lost the blessing in achieving efficiency.

Much of our modern giving does not even spring from an interest in the cause to which we give, or from any concern about the needy ones who profit by our gift. All too often we give because it is expected of us, because our social position demands it, or because we are a little ashamed of ourselves if we do not.

I suppose it is better to give for these reasons than not to give at all. At least we can look ourselves in the face without feeling little and stingy! But can we, as Christian people, look God in the face as those who give because of love for Him and devotion to His cause? When Jesus dwelt in mortal clay,

What were His works from day to day,
But miracles of power and grace,
That spread salvation through our race?
Teach us, O Lord, to keep in view
Thy pattern, and Thy steps pursue;
Let alms bestowed, let kindness done,
Be witnessed by each rolling sun.
Teach us to mark, from day to day,
In generous acts our radiant way,
Tread the same path our Saviour trod,
The path to glory and to God.

- Thomas Gibbons

* * *

GRUDGING GIFTS In His physical agony in the crucifixion Jesus Christ cried out, "I thirst" (John 19:28). This cry was answered. A rough Roman soldier took a sponge, put it on a reed, and lifted it to the lips of the Son of God. It was not a very nice sponge, possibly the same sponge which the soldiers kept in the basin to wipe the blood from their own hands after they had driven the nails.

One of the things which speaks of the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ is this sponge of a soldier, dipped in the vinegar-the sour wine which the soldiers drank, stuck upon the end of a spear, the shaft of a spear, a reed, or a piece of cane, and lifted to His lips.

"I thirst!" This cry, faint and seeming to come from a long way off as it reached the ears of those at the Cross, brought forth on the part of the soldier some degree of compassion apparently; for he hastened to moisten the sponge and lift it up. But it is a strange compassion, for it is a compassion that is mixed with mockery. We are told in the Word of God that the soldier who gave Him the drink mocked Him (Luke 23:36).

The Lord asks man for a gift for Himself. The Lord calls, and man answers. Man even yet sometimes answers with vinegar. The Lord asks for the gift of some good thing in man's life, and man gives it so grudgingly that the gift which might have been sweet wine is like vinegar to Him.

Sometimes we who call ourselves Christians give so begrudgingly, and our lives are so at variance with the things we profess, that the Lord is mocked by our gifts. This soldier, rough, possibly a bit compassionate as one might be compassionate with the suffering of an animal, but not recognizing the deity of the Man on the Cross, offered Him drink. He offered the Lord his own sour wine, not because he felt any deep compassion for the Son of God, but because he saw the man who was suffering and heard him cry out for drink. It was given without any grudge or any genuine goodness-given with mockery. Sometimes our gifts to the Lord are much like that, full of mockery even while we make them.

O how can they look up to heaven, And ask for mercy there,
Who never soothed the poor man's pang, Nor dried the orphan's tear?
The dread omnipotence of heaven We every hour provoke;
Yet still the mercy of our God Withholds the avenging stroke.
And Christ was still the healing friend Of poverty and pain;
And never did imploring soul His garment touch in vain.
May we with humble effort take Example from above;
And thence the active lesson learn Of charity and love!

- Simon Browne

* * * **ADORATION DEMANDED** The story of the blind man whose sight the Lord restored and who, being questioned about the miracle, answered, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25), is a familiar one. But one of the most interesting incidents in connection with the

story is often overlooked. It is this: that having heard that the man had been questioned and reviled by the Pharisees and cast out by them, Jesus found him and made known His own deity unto him, declaring that He was the Son of God, and asked him if he believed on Him. The man replied, "Lord, I believe" (John 9:38). And, says the record, "He worshipped Him."

This is a natural sequence of events. The man who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, who accepts His deity, who acknowledges the fact that He is the Son of God, must perforce worship Him, for deity demands adoration. The salvation of the souls of men depends upon their belief in Jesus Christ. They believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved; but that belief, the Scripture makes plain, is more than simply an intellectual acceptance of His deity; it is more than a mere mental assent to the truth of the Scripture which reveals the fact that He is God come in the flesh.

The belief in Christ which brings salvation is the belief which has its center in the heart of the believer. Since all the issues of life, the Bible tells us, are out of the heart, what a man believes in his heart will affect the way he lives, will shape the course of his life. Every man, therefore, who truly believes in Jesus Christ, will do exactly as the man who had known the miracle of restored eyesight. He will worship Him, for when the heart believes, the knee must bow.

Come, let us tune our loftiest song, And raise to Christ our joyful strain;

Worship and thanks to Him belong,

Who reigns, and shall forever reign.

His sovereign power our bodies made; Our souls are His immortal breath;

And when His creatures sinned, He bled, To save us from eternal death.

Extol the Lamb with loftiest song,

Ascend for Him our cheerful strain;

Worship and thanks to Him belong,

Who reigns, and shall forever reign.

-Robert A. West

* * * PROMPT OBEDIENCE

It is doubtful if there were ever another church with two such deacons as those first men chosen by the disciples of the Early Church in Jerusalem. One of them, Stephen, became the first Christian martyr, and what a triumph of Christian victory his martyrdom was! The other deacon was Philip, who proved by his life what Stephen proved by his death that they were men "full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom . . ." (Acts 6:3).

Philip was in the midst of a great revival in Samaria. So spectacular were the reports which reached Jerusalem that Peter and John went down to look over the situation and see for them-selves whether all they had heard was true.

Seeing the evidence of the outpouring of God's power, they were convinced that here, through Philip, God was accomplishing a great work of grace. It was in the midst of such a useful ministry

that the angel of the Lord came to Philip commanding him to go down into the desert country toward the south.

A man less filled with the Holy Ghost would have stopped to protest that here in Samaria many souls were being saved, that here he was doing a great work for God. Surely, he would argue, under these circumstances it would be foolish to leave a city where throngs were hearing his messages and set out for the desert. But not Philip! So responsive was he to the voice of God, so controlled by the Holy Spirit that without a word of argument "he arose and went" (Acts 8:27).

Deep faith always begets prompt obedience. God knew what He was doing when He picked Philip up out of the great revival of Samaria and sent him down to the desert. He had arranged a rendezvous there for Philip with the treasurer of Ethiopia. God needed Philip there in the wilderness to point the Ethiopian to Christ. Tradition has it that this Ethiopian eunuch went back to his own country to found there the first Christian church in all Africa. Who knows but that eternity will reveal countless thousands of dark-skinned men among the hosts of the redeemed because of Philip's obedience to the command of God! Who knows what great things you can accomplish for God if you will only trust and obey!

Whate'er my God ordains is right; His will is ever just;

Howe'er He orders now my cause,

I will be still and trust.

He is my God;

Though dark my road,

He holds me that I shall not fall,

Wherefore to Him I leave it all.

Whate'er my God ordains is right; My light, my life is He,

Who cannot will me aught but good;

I trust Him utterly;

For well I know,

In joy or woe,

We soon shall see, as sunlight clear,

How faithful was our guardian here.

Whate'er my God ordains is right;

Here will I take my stand,

Though sorrow, need, or death make earth

For me a desert land.

My Father's care is round me there,

He holds me that I shall not fall;

And so to Him I leave it all.

-Samuel Rodigast (Translated by Catherine Winkworth)

* * *

JOY IN TRIAL

Possibly one of the most misunderstood verses in the Scripture is the second verse of the first chapter of James: "Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." The reason for this misunderstanding is due to the fact that certain words in the time when our King James translation was made had a different meaning from that which is now applied to them. In modern English, this verse means: "Count it all joy when you fall into all kinds of trials."

Every man and woman is beset by all sorts of difficulties and obstacles and unpleasant things which he would, if he could, avoid; but he is overtaken by them whether he will or not. The Christian, and it is to Christian people that James is writing, is admonished, however, to receive such trials and testings with joy. Indeed, since he knows that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28), how else can he receive them but with joy, since very obviously they are sent for his good. However unpleasant they may be at the time, they bring blessing into his life.

After all, aside from being good Scriptural admonition, this verse is psychologically good advice, for the best way to bear a trial is to bear it patiently and joyfully. The man who "kicks against the pricks," who struggles against that which he cannot avoid, finds it more difficult than the man who relaxes and accepts what comes. But to the Christian, it is not a mere bearing stoically what he must endure; it is with him a relaxing because of his trust in God and his knowledge that God sends only that which comes to bless him.

To the Christian, trials are a revelation of God's love. We know that those "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth . . ." (Hebrews 12:6), and the trials are a part of God's chastening.

The purpose of all chastening is not a mere desire to make the object of the chastening suffer, but rather to train him that he may develop into a finer person. As the gold is refined by the fire, so are the soul and character refined through trial and suffering.

- Without testing, there can be no development;

- Without trials, there can be no growth;

- Without chastening, there can be no learning.

A child finds out when he is burned that fire must be avoided as dangerous; so God's testings for the saints are oftentimes God's best ways of teaching us. Jesus instructs us to count it joy when we fall into all kinds of trials and testings because we know that the trying of our faith worketh patience, and patience must have her perfect work if we are to come into the perfection which God desires of His children.

God, make me brave for life: oh, braver than this.

Let me straighten after pain, as a tree straightens after the rain,

Shining and lovely again.

God, make me brave for life; much braver than this. As the blown grass lifts, let me rise From sorrow with quiet eyes, Knowing Thy way is wise.

God, make me brave, life brings Such blinding things.

Help me to keep my sight;

Help me to see aright That out of dark comes light.

- Anonymous

* * *

EPITAPHS

Nothing may be more false than an epitaph. Affection or mere human kindness induces men to write words of tribute on the tombs of the departed of which the deceased have been unworthy.

Great kings and emperors in bygone ages have left behind them monuments covered with bombastic praise of themselves and of their works which the sculptors, working under royal mandate, must have inscribed with their tongues in their cheeks or have had much "ado" to keep their sense of humor from betraying them into a smile.

Much, however, can be known about a man from one sentence aptly chosen and honestly worded. A lifetime of devotion and unselfish service can be glimpsed in those words inscribed on the headstone of a missionary's lonely grave on a distant shore.

"When he landed there were no Christians on the island.

When he died there were no heathen." In the Bible there are a number of men about whom only a few words are written, but from the accurate record of God's Book it is possible to learn as much about the character of the man from a brief statement as if a whole biography had been written.

For example, in the list of "the mighty men of valour" set down in II Chronicles, chapter seventeen, is included the name of Amasiah, the son of Zichri, who the writer says, "Willingly offered himself unto the Lord."

This much and no more the record contains, but in this brief statement we catch the glimpse of a man who is successful and wise and brave, for all these are characteristic of the man who gives himself to God. It is the wise thing to do. What finer epitaph could be written for a nobleman of God than this of Amasiah, who "willingly offered himself unto the Lord."

Lord, I am Thine, entirely Thine,

Purchased and saved by blood divine;

With full consent Thine I would be,

And own Thy sovereign right in me.
Grant one poor sinner more a place
Among the children of Thy grace;
A wretched sinner, lost to God,
But ransomed by Immanuel's blood.
Thine would I live, Thine would I die,
Be Thine through all eternity;
The vow is past beyond repeal,
And now I set the solemn seal.
Here, at that Cross where flows the blood
That bought my guilty soul for God,
Thee, my new Master, now I call,
And consecrate to Thee my all.

-Samuel Davies

* * * "WHATS IN A NAME"

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." These words of Shakespeare are often quoted to show how little value a name possesses, but Shakespeare's philosophy here is not as sound as it seems at first glance. Association gives importance to a name.

Names have become so associated with certain products that the name has become almost a synonym for the article manufactured under the name. This name calls to mind a fountain pen; that, a typewriter; a third, a cosmetic.

Some men have forever debased their name. Judas has come to mean betrayer, and Quisling has made his name synonymous with traitor. There is a great deal in a name. Men name their sons after great men, after statesmen, heroes, reformers. How many of our common names are taken from the great names of the Bible: Paul, Peter, Mark, James and Joseph, Ruth and Mary.

In Bible names particularly there is a great significance.

Names were often changed when the circumstances of a man's life underwent some change. Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego were not the names given to those three Israelites at their birth but the names bestowed upon them by the prince of the eunuchs when they were taken captives to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. When Joseph became the prime minister of Egypt, his name was changed by the Pharaoh to "Zaphnathpaaneah." This name means "a man to whom secrets are revealed" or "the revealer of secrets"-a most appropriate name for one who could interpret the dreams and visions of others and who was given to prophetic visions and dreams himself.

God sometimes changed a man's name. Abram, which means: "high father," was changed to Abraham, which means: "father of a great multitude." Jacob was changed to Israel. Saul, the "great one," became Paul, the "little one."

"The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch," and ever since that day the followers of the Lord have been known by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Names are important, but more important than the fact that it is by our names that men know us is the truth that the Lord Himself knows His own. "I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14).

Thou dear Redeemer, dying Lamb, I love to hear of Thee;
No music's like Thy charming name, Nor half so sweet can be.
My Jesus shall be still my theme, While in this world I stay;
I'll sing my Jesus' lovely Name When all things else decay.
When I appear in yonder cloud, With all Thy favored throng,
Then will I sing more sweet, more loud, And Christ shall be my song.

- John Cennick

* * *

HARVEST COMES A great New England preacher once promised to fill the pulpit of a country church on a certain Sunday. That Sunday New England was held in the grip of a blizzard. Roads were almost impassable. The preacher thought to himself, "There is no use in my going out to that church. No one will come out through such a storm. There will be nobody to preach to."

But, being a conscientious man, he went. Setting out on his journey quite early, he was able to make his way through the snowdrifts, and finally arrived a few minutes before the time of worship. Stabling his horse in a shed behind the church, he entered the deserted building, built a fire and went up into the pulpit.

Precisely on the hour when the service was to begin one man entered the church and sat down at the back.

The preacher wondered whether or not he should go ahead with a service in the presence of a congregation of one. Finally he announced a hymn, and the occupant of the pew and the occupant of the pulpit sang it together. The preacher prayed, another hymn was sung and the service proceeded just as if the church had been filled with worshippers. At the close of his message the minister pronounced the benediction, intending to speak to his "congregation" afterward; but when he had spoken the final "Amen" and opened his eyes, the man was gone.

Twenty years later out in Ohio a stranger came up to the New England minister. "Do you remember me?" he asked. "You and I spent an hour and a half together alone in a blizzard twenty years ago. I was saved that day under your preaching of the Gospel. Now I also am a preacher, and within this state there are a half-dozen men standing in pulpits who were saved under my ministry. All this has come because you were faithful in witnessing when the testimony must have

seemed to you of little value.”

While the follower of Christ is not responsible for the results which his testimony produces, he is responsible to live a life which will prove the truth of his words.

As followers of Christ we must live like people who have met a Risen Saviour. Unless there is in your life something of the sweetness which characterizes the Saviour, something of His humility and gentleness and long-suffering and mercy, you cannot be very well acquainted with Him. You cannot know Him in the power of His Resurrection life without a newness of life yourself, and your works lend weight to your witness.

Sow in the morn thy seed; At eve hold not thy hand;

To doubt and fear give thou no heed, Broadcast it o'er the land.

Thou knowest not which shall strive, The late or early sown;

Grace keeps the precious germ alive, When and where ever strewn:

Thou canst not toil in vain:

Cold, heat and moist and dry,

Shall foster and mature the grain For garnerers in the sky.

Thence, when the glorious end, The day of God, shall come,

The angel reapers shall descend, And heaven shout, “Harvest home!”

- James Montgomery

* * * SERVING THE LORD

He who would serve the Lord must be both diligent in his business and fervent in spirit. “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Romans 12:11), is the admonition of the writer of the Book of Romans. Often a man is diligent about the task he must perform, but there is no warmth and fervor and love for the task; and such service must always be limited and uninspired and unenjoyed by the laborer.

A nurse, hired to look after children, may be careful to perform her task well and be diligent to see that she does her duty; but a mother, loving her children and happy with them and thrilled with the opportunity of caring for them, has a fervency in spirit which glorifies and hangs an aura of beauty and of blessing over the most menial task in, the home.

Our Lord speaks of the difference between the shepherd and the hireling in the moment of crisis when the wolf comes.

The shepherd, He declares, “giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11); but “the hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep” (John 10:13). Diligence may manifest itself under ordinary routine, but it takes fervency to glorify such routine and to meet the crisis when it comes.

The really useful servant of God is the one who is always abounding in the work of the Lord and who at the same time prays without ceasing. If “the plowing of the wicked is sin” (Proverbs 21:4), then by the same rule, any task of God’s man, infused with His spirit and steeped in prayer, becomes a sacred task and true service for the Lord.

A man cannot pray about a godless act, and a man cannot be unceasing in prayer unless he is truly abounding in the work of the Lord. To serve God and serve Him right, there must be a devotion and affection for Him and a warmth of heart which leads instinctively to prayer.

At the same time, there must be no slothfulness in business. One must be both diligent and fervent truly to serve the Lord. Without both, the service is incomplete and can never merit the Master’s “Well done!”

Somehow strength lasted through the day,

Hope joined with courage in the way;

The feet still kept the uphill road,

The shoulders did not drop their load,

And unseen Power sustained the heart

When flesh and will failed in their part, While God gave light By day and night,

And also grace to bear the smart. For this give thanks.

- Anonymous

* * * THE REJECTED STONE

There is an old legend that when Solomon’s Temple was being built in Jerusalem, a stone came up from the quarries below for which the workers could find no place in the building. Apparently it did not fit anywhere into the structure. Assuming that a mistake had been made by the quarry workers, the stone was tumbled over the edge of the eminence upon which the Temple was being constructed and allowed to fall down into the debris of the valley below.

Weeks later they found that everything seemed to be on hand except the chief corner stone which was to complete the structure. Word was sent down to the quarry foreman that they were ready for the cornerstone, and the reply came that this had been sent weeks before.

They searched but failed to find it until someone remembered the stone thrown over the edge of the hill, and going down into the valley, they found there the stone which was intended for the chief ornamentation of the structure. With laborious effort they pulled it back up again and slipped it into place, and the Temple was finished.

Whether there is any truth in the old story, no man can say; but true or not, it illustrates very graphically the meaning of the verse, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner” (Luke 20:17). God, the Father, has selected the Lord Jesus Christ for the chief place in the plan of the ages. He it is who shall rule as King; and until He occupies the throne, there will be no universal justice and peace.

The world has sought to achieve concord in human relationships and a perfection of civilization without Him. He has been rejected, and the house of civilization will be forever incomplete until He has His rightful place.

God, the Father, in His own good time, will see that His Son, which the builders of "a brave, new world" have rejected, shall become the very Center and Foundation of the social structure. He was rejected and nailed to a cross; but because He endured that shame, the Father has in His plans highly exalted Him; and He someday shall occupy the chief place in the affairs of men as He is now the center of worship of heavenly beings. A new and spotless page appears

With every coming dawn,

And thou, O soul, art given to choose

What thou shalt write thereon.

What name shall grace the page today,

Thine own in words of fire?

Or shall "The Christ" be blazoned there,

His Cross thy sole desire?

- Ruth Gibbs

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