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## Truth's Deeper Values PART I

*"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings,  
being made conformable unto his death. - Phil. 3:10.*

PAUL'S LETTER to the Philippians has been most aptly termed, "the window of his son." In no other letter from his hand do we get such a glimpse into his Christ-desiring heart, as we do in this. All the strong tides of an unusual personality are to be seen gushing forth from the deep chambers of his soul, rising up to bear on their bosom the most sacred longings of many generations of faithful men. It was given to Paul, as to the Psalmists of old, to express in cogent words the passionate yearnings of the human soul as they reached up and beyond this mundane world to make contact with the things of God. So truly did he interpret and express those longings, and that never-satiated need for "the closer touch," that thousands upon thousands of the saintliest men, in reading those expressive words, have said, Yes! that goes for me too. Thousands have rejoiced to say Amen to his fervent prayer.

The nearest likeness to Philippians in this respect is that delightful letter addressed to Philemon about Onesimus. Here a true Christian courtesy finds expression in words of rare charm as he beseeches Philemon to accept, to forgive, and to welcome home again his former faithless slave, not now merely as a slave, but as a brother in the Lord -- for "Paul the aged's" sake. Only a heart charged with the deepest sympathy could write like that.

The next nearest in likeness to Philippians are those tender solicitations for son Timothy, whereas with a father's heart, he yearns over the welfare, both spiritually and physically of a beloved child in the faith. - 1 and 2 Timothy.

But these near likenesses were addressed to single individuals, while Philippians was addressed to a whole church, concerning which but one solitary phrase of reproof and entreaty was necessary. Two sisters, both beloved by Paul for their work's sake, were at variance on some minor point, and causing some disturbance to the serenity and peace of this exemplary Church.

Paul loved the Church at Philippi with a fervent love. He thanked God for them frequently. They were at once his joy and crown, his joy because they loved the Lord so ardently; his crown because their warm-heartedness was to him as the laurel wreath to the successful athlete in the Isthmian games -- the proof that he had run well in their midst and had won success. Consequently he could open his heart to these as to few besides. And, in opening up the treasure-chambers of his heart he knew he could reveal to them those things so precious to himself; himself assured that they both *could* and would understand why he so greatly longed to know and possess his Lord. Men do not open up, the holy places of the soul to the scoffing tongues or scornful eye. Because his love for them was so intense, and because he had come to know them so intimately well, he knew he could "let them in" on the deepest secrets and confidences of his soul. He could confide to them hallowed things which he could not tell to any other church, and because of this both they and we are permitted to catch a passing glimpse of the white-hot fervor of his love for his beloved Lord. Words like those written here would have seemed out of *place* in his letters to Corinth, and to Rome. Even *in* Ephesus and Colosse, there was nothing to draw forth these deep and tender yearnings in such swelling; volume as at Philippi. It speaks much for these saints at Philippi that this usurped Great-heart of the early Church could unbosom himself: so completely in words of such beauty and depth. To *how* many Ecclesias of our own Fellowship today could, he thus have unbosomed himself? One wonders!

It would take *more* time and space than our present purpose allows to take up all, these delicious gems of thought for reverential review. It must suffice us, at this time, to take the few words of our text, with a verse or two preceding and succeeding them, to draw therefrom the evidences that the Truth has more and deeper values than those that lie on the surface of the text, those seen and appreciated by the casual reader of the Word; and that it was these deeper values which were the objects of Paul's intensely ardent desire. In a life, which on its lighter side had been filled so extremely abundantly with the good things of God, these deeper values were the things he prized more highly than all the rest.

The prime arresting point which grips our minds as we ponder over his words is that they were written by a man who had known the Truth for many zealous years more deeply than any other living man. For five and twenty years (at least) he had been a chosen vessel to his Lord, and had borne the story of his life and death and resurrection -- with all that they implied -- over most of the wide spaces of the near East. No man had labored more diligently than he. No other man, like he, had plumbed those deeper features of the Truth pertaining to the all sufficient sacrifice of Jesus, and its vital relationship to the Divine Plan. Nor could any other servant of the Lord explain the facts, or the deeper groundwork of philosophy which underlie those facts, so ably as he. Other teaching brethren -- among them a member of "the twelve" -- spake of these fundamental things as "difficult to understand."

But to the cultivated mind of Paul -- trained in the processes of analysis and deduction -- the things he taught and wrote were the obvious conclusions to draw from the facts pertaining to the continued reign of sin and death, and from the ways and means instituted by the judge of all the earth to release men from the thralldom of these evil powers. He had come to see and understand why that supreme Law of God had had to come in, first to condemn humankind, later to offer acquittal to such as could exercise true faith in the Divine Purposes. He had come to see that by one man's single sin the whole of that man's progeny had become involved in his penalty, and also, on the obverse side, how by One Man's righteous sacrifice, the Law could be satisfied, and all that sinner's seed included in his -own release from the guilt-worthiness of his sin.

John and Peter knew something of this redemption as matter-of-fact Christian truth, but neither John nor Peter attempted at any time to argue the case as it stood "in law." Only Paul alone, of all

the Lord's ambassadorial band, provides any evidence of that necessary insight into these redemption facts so as to be able to place them on a legal basis, and show that by the death of God's worthy Lamb the all-pervading Law of heaven and earth had been satisfied, and that the overruling judge who had decreed that man must die, could now supersede his first decree, and say that man could be presented with an opportunity to live.

It is this very man who understood so well the legal ground-work of the Plan -- and of Jesus' place in relation to that Plan-who now gives voice to those deeper longings which all that wider knowledge had never satisfied. Perhaps it is safe to say he knew more *about* his Lord than any living man, yet with all his understanding there was one thing he did not yet know, as he yearned to know it in the hard places of his life. Five and twenty years (or more) of his life had been spent in telling men -- Gentile and Jew -- about his Lord, and all that he stood for in the Plan of God; hence it is no mere novice in the faith that seeks to know his Lord so ardently. He had grown old beyond his years by the ardor of his service to his Lord, and had made thousands to know *about* that Lord, yet here we find him ardently desiring to learn the one thing he had hitherto been unable to tell. Already he had written that doctrinal masterpiece, the Epistle to the Romans; already he had told the Thessalonians and the Corinthians about the resurrection certainties of their beloved dead; and in that sublime chapter (1 Cor. 15) he had penned the most profound and exquisite outline of the saints' final change into the likeness of their Lord that Holy Writ affords, and, even now, as he dictates this script to Philippi, his mind is scaling all those lofty heights of thought and truth which enrich his messages to Colosse and Ephesus.

### **"THAT I MAY KNOW HIM"**

It is the combination of these two things,

(a) the fact that he did know so much *about* his Lord, and

(b) that knowing so much, and for so long, he longed and yearned to learn more, and still more, the Person of his Lord, that makes his words so remarkable.

Surely, we are entitled (on the strength of these two facts) to say that there is a tremendous difference between knowing about the Lord (with all that that means in the Redemptive Plan), and "knowing him" for what he is in himself as a personality. Surely one would not need unduly to press the point that that which could be said *about* a man could be a vitally different thing from that which reveals his inner personality -- simply because the whole that could be said *about* him, need not of necessity be the whole of that inner life's values. An employer may be able to know and say much *about* a man, but it is almost unchallengingly safe to say that the only one who could know the man, in the inner sanctum of his soul, -would be the one closely linked to him by wedded love, and then only after a span of years spent in the closest intimacy with him.

During the crowded lifetime of the late esteemed Lord Lister (the discoverer and advocate of antiseptic surgery) many people got to know much about this wonderful man, but, because he was of a shy, retiring nature, very few, save his own kith and kin, and a very small circle of intimate friends, ever got to know him "as the sufferer's friend" which he truly was. Perhaps something like this could be said of nearly every man and woman on the earth today, for it must be essentially and universally true that only those to whom the portals of the heart are swung widely ajar can enter therein and know and, understand those graces of the personality which adorn and enrich that inner sanctum of the soul.

Amazing as the situation may seem, this was exactly what Paul wanted to experience with the person of his Lord. As for himself he already knew he was fully known by his Lord (1 Cor. 13:12), for that gracious One had long won for himself right of entry into the sanctum of Paul's soul. That was accordant with the Divine Desire to find a place of rest, which neither temple nor tabernacle could afford. But, finite though he was, Paul yearned and longed and prayed that he might find means of entry into the heart of the exalted Infinite One, who had loved him and redeemed him at such amazing cost. In all those crucial sufferings which came into his life with such repeated regularity Paul longed to know and feel and experience more and more, with every, passing day, that inflow of divine sympathy and succor that could find its source only in the loving heart of his exalted Lord, and to hear, in the depths of his own love-linked soul, those words of encouragement from his Master's approving voice.

On the basis of superficial reading and reasoning we might have expected Paul to have said something like this after that arresting experience on the Damascus way-say, when he first dared to frame and raise a prayer (Acts 9:11), or when he was brooding and thinking there on Arabia's desert sands. (Gal. 1:17.) Under circumstances such as those, it might have seemed the very thing to ask from his Lord—we could have understood it there; but to find him here, after so many active ardent years, relieving himself of the deepest longing of the soul, in these amazing words, is another thing—a very different thing—a thing, which, in our own trying, disappointing days needs looking into very earnestly and carefully. If there is something more in the Christian's present heritage over and above the knowledge of the many wonderful things we know *about* our Lord in his great redemptive work, past, present, and to come, surely we will need to know it and profit by it in these closing days of the Church's experience; especially so, if, as seems indicated in some parts of Holy Writ, a Gethsemane experience still awaits the last followers of the Lord ere they are caught up to see and be with their Lord.

### **COUNTED ALL ELSE BUT LOSS**

That we have presented Paul's exact thought foregoing is apparent when we can grasp the full, deep scope of his argument. At one time, he had considered himself exceeding rich in life's assets, gained by observance of the Law. But whereas once he was rich, now he was poor, for he had suffered for Christ's sake the loss of all these, things, and had come to count them only as uneatable refuse from *a* meal -- the waste usually thrown to the scavengers and dogs. All these assets of birth and accomplishment had been surrendered and discarded for the sake of gaining a present inheritance in Christ, in order that he might, at length, when present suffering days are at an end, attain to an "out-of-the-dead resurrection" to be with his Lord.

Already he was enjoying participation with his Lord, as one, who like him, had received the spirit of the Anointing, but, as yet, he was not sure of participation with him in that special resurrection "out-of-the-dead." Hence, in verse 11, his words are of a provisional and contingent nature -- "If by any means I may attain to the resurrection out of the dead." His all-consuming desire was 'to "win Christ and be found in him" at that crucial vital hour when the special dead were due to be raised from their sleep in death. By whom would those special dead be *found* in Christ? Who would be the Seeker and Finder of these special dead in order to rouse them, and give them right of entry into the full glory of Christ? Surely none but he who had raised Jesus from the dead as the first of the firstfruits class! It would be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who would come seeking and finding among the dead all those in whom the spirit of the Anointed had reached full bloom—the full qualifying degree of conformity to the character of his well-beloved Son. To reach that full qualifying degree of likeness to his Lord, Paul knew he must share with Jesus *in* the sufferings of this present time, and like him, be made perfect (in his intents) by these sufferings. Moreover, he also knew that in order to endure those sufferings patiently (and with gain), he must

acquire that clasp and grip upon his Lord, and become linked and interlocked with him in such close confidential knowledge and understanding, each to each, that no power on earth, nor any amount of pain or loss, could separate or cause the slightest severance between his Lord and himself.

### **"KNOWING HIM" AND "KNOWING ABOUT HIM"**

To be "in Christ" in this present phase of association, afforded no assurance to Paul that he would "win Christ and be found in him" when the heavenly Seeker came to seek whom he could "find" among the assembly of the dead, worthy enough to participate in the "out of," special resurrection of the dead. But Paul knew, at that time, that there were two things in his life that could tend towards the certainty of winning such a place in Christ and of being found in him when the divine Seeker came.

The first of these things was to share in the sufferings of Christ in this present time, being made perfect thereby; and the other that of gaining such a grip upon his Lord by "knowing him," that the mighty enabling power of his resurrected Lord could come 'through into his present course in life, and give strength to his strivings all along the way.

Hence the key to all hope of attainment to that, future life with Christ was to be found in the present priceless privilege of "knowing, him." Hence, we need not wonder that with advancing years we find the yearning desire becoming more ardent and passionate. Only when "deep" calls to "deep," can the foundations of life be stirred; only when "like" appeals to "like" can soul-stirring responses be evoked; only when "affinity" out-reaches to "affinity" can unbreakable attachments be made. Only when the "perfectness" of his Lord reached down to that "being perfected" in Paul, could the unfinished follower hope to ascend to his "Finished" Lord.

What can these experiences and words of Paul mean to us today? What is this difference between "knowing him," and knowing "about him," which these words of Paul reveal?

As a main point of difference would it not be right to classify all those things which Paul had known about his Lord as doctrinal truth? Do not our own doctrinal truths tell us *about* our Lord? Do they not tell us who he was, what he was, what he did, where he is, why he is where he is, and what he has yet to do ere the redemptive work entrusted to his care is complete? Is not every point of doctrine essential to *our* present understanding comprehended in that simple classification? It ranges backwards to his exalted pre-human estate; it sees him who was rich divest himself of all his wealth to become a man; it sees him come to baptism and consecration and on to Calvary and the tomb; it witnesses of his awakening and exaltation to immortality; it expects his coming forth again to take his glorious Throne, and then, all enemies destroyed, and man restored, it sees him give place to God that God may be "all in all."

But none of these things show us what he is in himself! This deeper knowledge must be learned from deeds not words; from experiences in which we ourselves must share. It must come from ever present "Tender-Shepherd-care" that meets us in our hour of need, turns weakness into strength, and frailty into energy. It is that which alone must turn blank promise into active realization.

God, through his Word, has made many promises, but they all need translating over into the facts and experiences of life for us. We are told that God will be our helper, and therefore we need not fear what men may do to us. (Heb. 13:5, 6.) We are told that grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:9), and therefore our weaknesses need not impede us in our activities. We are also told that all

things work together for good to them that love him, who are called according to his purpose. (Rom. 8:28.) These are *some* of the exceeding great and precious promises, but the whole range of them is provisional. Their fulfillment to us is contingent upon certain responses arising from our own hearts and lives. They are not fulfilled automatically or unconditionally apart from those responses on our part. Without the "asking" in our times of need, there may be no supply of grace for us; without the constant yielding of our hearts and minds to God, there may be no working together for good, in the "all things" of our life. Without the oft-repeated daily prayer to be "kept," there may be no "keeping power" put forth on our behalf. Thus without our hunger and thirst for their fulfillment, they can remain nothing more than blank promises so far as we are concerned.

### **RESURRECTION POWER ALL-ESSENTIAL**

Now this would be a rather serious situation for us if we were always left to our own resources. Many who have known about these promises have grown cold and insensitive towards them, and have lost hold in consequence. Why is this? Is it not because they have lost that warm affinity with their beloved Lord, and as a consequence the "member" is not keenly sensitive to the first impulses "to ask" which proceed from the "Head." All the first promptings that precede the "askings" must come from the Lord. It is "He" that initiates the first flickerings of desire that result in our prayer for help, our petitions to be "kept," and our constant yieldings to the will of God. Without the primal impulse from his loving heart, our cold, lethargic nature would be too unready to "ask." As a result, therefore, if we failed to "ask" we would also fail to receive. Thus in all our weaknesses, as well as in our sufferings, the power that flows from his resurrection is the all essential thing that makes for our safe-keeping (our salvation) day by day. This is the thought of Paul in Rom. 5:10, "being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

And all this is contingent upon the prior blessedness of "knowing Him." The fulfillment of the precious promises lies within the sphere of Providence, of gentle Shepherd-care. New and fresh fulfillments come with every passing day to those who live sensitive to these heavenly influences. Unlike doctrinal truth, which was revealed once for all time, this deeper phase of truth is revealed anew every day, and in a thousand ways. Its myriad forms of revelation are not written in any literal text, except in the broad general sense that one blank promise can be translated into a thousand different forms of fulfillment. It is in these thousand ways that the trusting sheep of his pasture learns to know the gentle touch of the watchful Shepherd's hand—in other words, this is the one and only right, royal method of learning to "know Him" more intimately every day. Here then is a sphere of truth, as true and certain (as to its facts) as are the great basic redemption truths of the Plan, but fully provisional (as to its realization by us), dependent entirely upon the intensity of our desire to apprehend them, and realizable by us only in proportion to our knowledge of our beloved Lord.

Paul had reached a point in his experience where a measure of uncertainty over-shadowed his pathway. So far as he then knew he might shortly have to stand face to face with death. He had weighed the situation up with calm and reasoned care and had reached the point where his own preference was dead. To live or to die were of little consequence to him now. If it pleased the Disposer of his life that he should-die his one desire was to feel the presence of his Master attending him as he passed the closing door: to feel the touch of his loving hand assuring him as he passed into the shadowland, and to know in the deep stillnesses of his soul that all was well.

Paul was confronted again at a later date with the same set of circumstances, but he had at last apprehended the object of his earlier desire. When his fickle friends forsook him, and left him unattended, to his fate, he had the blessed realization of his Lord attending him. As he faced the

Roman bar, he knew "the Lord stood by" him, and in consequence could say "I know *him* (R.V.) whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." There was no "if by any means I might attain" now in his utterance. Instead, he could say, "There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord . . . shall give me at that day." (2 Tim. 4:8.) This, at last, was his confident and victorious assurance.

Since his day other great souls have lived and died with the same intense desires-with that same ardent longing to live that inner life with Him. They were not the warring theologians of their day -- they were the Mary-like souls, seeking ever the "better part," ever blessed with that inner vision that saw "the Lord standing by," either in the prison cell or in the busy mart. The theologian and the rationalist often called them fools and dreamers, and said they lived in a world of unrealities. But they knew him whom they believed (not merely creeds and dogmas) and that knowledge was as nectar to their souls. These were the men (and women too) that often faced the stake, and other deaths unflinchingly, because they always knew that Jesus himself "stood by."

We shall have something to say about Paul's doctrine in due course, but for our immediate purpose it is this deeper phase of Paul's life and experience that we propose to place over against the present needs of our Fellowship.

We shall go on to show that more attention to this inner life, and to that deeper experience of "knowing him" is the one and only panacea for the maladies which afflict us everywhere; and that any attempt to unify our broken, scattered ranks by erecting old doctrinal standards as a basis of reunion, is only administering over again that potion that has stupified and deadened our sensitiveness in the past. We shall show what effect an undue insistence upon doctrinal definition has had (a) upon the whole Christian Church generally and (b) upon our own Fellowship in particular, until recent days. We stand at a parting of the ways today, and could make a sad mistake, unless we know and understand the deeper values that underlie the Truth.

- *T. Holmes, Eng.*



# **"Glory, Honor, and Immortality"**

## **A WORD STUDY**

SEVENTEEN YEARS ago, in "Half Hour Meditations on Romans" No. 20, which appeared in his journal in the issue of October 1, 1931, we expressed the thought that the word which is translated "immortality" in the phrase, "glory, honor, and immortality" (Rom. 2:7), does not mean inherent life. We further observed that the context in which this word occurs, far from making exclusive reference to the Church of this Gospel Age does not make any reference to it or its members, as such, but is a broad, general statement having application to every member of Adam's race, Jew or Gentile.

Since, in our judgment, it is essential to a proper grasp of the Apostle's argument that these two points be clearly seen, and since the translation "immortality" is faulty, and tends to obscure the Apostle's line of reasoning, it was thought well to elaborate the matter further. This was done in an article captioned "Athanasia and Aphtharsia Distinguished, which was published in the Herald for June 1, 1932. In response to request, that article is here reprinted:

### **The Point of the Apostle's Argument**

In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans the Apostle has shown that the Gentiles, apart from "his" gospel of a "faith-righteousness" are without hope. In this his Jewish readers would readily concur; but they could not believe that the same was true of themselves. They "had Abraham to their father," etc., etc. To convince them that their case was just as hopeless as that of the Gentiles, the Apostle presents, in a most tactful way, a very simple argument--an argument simple enough to a mind open to truth--one which could be revealed even to "babes" (Matt. 11:25), but which was very difficult for the Jews to grasp because of the prejudice which they held. Briefly stated, the position of the Apostle is this: God's judgment will be absolutely impartial. Questions of birth or other privilege can never enter into His decision. (Romans 2:2.) He will render to every man according to his deeds, including, as the word translated "deeds" suggests, the motives actuating those deeds. Nothing else will be considered. (Romans 2:6.) No questions will be asked as to whether an individual is a Jew or a Gentile--the only matter of moment will be as to his aim and course in life. Patient continuance in well doing will be rewarded with eternal life; the opposite aim and course will be suitably punished. (Romans 2:7-9.) Clinching his argument, the Apostle maintains that no matter whether the individual be Jew or Gentile, strict, impartial judgment according to character qualifications must obtain in that day, "for there is no respect of persons with God." -- Romans 2:11.

The whole purpose of his argument, it seems to us, is to prepare their minds for "his" gospel of faith-righteousness (justification by faith). If they can but be brought to realize that God's judgment will be according to "deeds and that in themselves they are incapable of "well-doing" in the Scriptural sense of that word, they will have reached the frame of mind capable of responding to the well-nigh irresistible appeal of the Gospel--a state of mind in which the Gospel will be able to prove itself "the power of God" unto their salvation.

Such a line of reasoning on the Apostle's part is so elementary to students of the Bible that it would be unnecessary to elaborate the matter further if it were not for the word. "immortality."



## **Immortality Appears in only Three Scriptures**

The difficulty which stands in the way of the English reader to hinder a proper, understanding of the Apostle's meaning lies in the fact that frequently the words "immortality" and "incorruption" are not properly, distinguished, but are thought of as synonymous terms. This, however, is not true of the English words, and scholars have observed that it is also untrue of the Greek words from which they are translated. These two Greek words are "Athanasia"- and "Aphtharsia."

Athanasia signifies "deathlessness." It appears only three times in the New Testament and in those places is properly translated "immortality. The three passages in which Athanasia appears are as follows

"This mortal must put on immortality." - 1 Cor. 15:53.

"When this mortal shall have put on immortality " - 1 Cor. 15:54.

"Who only hath immortality." - 1 Tim. 6:16.

We understand that the first two of these Scriptures relate- to the individual members of the glorified Church, and the third to our glorified Lord Jesus, the Father here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, being excepted from comparison.

The other Greek word "Aphtharsia" (and "Aphthartos," an adjective from the same root as the noun Aphtharsia) are rendered immortality twice, immortal once, sincerity twice, "but would more properly be rendered incorruption and incorruptible, and are generally so rendered by lexicographers." Aphtharsia signifies "incapable of decay." The following represent all the passages in the Bible in which it (or aphthartos) occurs:

"The glory of the incorruptible [aphthartos - incorruptible] God." - Rom. 1:23.

"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality [aphtharsia - incorruption]."-Rom. 2:7.

"They do it to obtain a corruptible crown but we an incorruptible [aphthartos]."-1 Cor. 9:25.

"It is sown in corruption it is-raised in incorruption [aphtharsia]." - 1 Cor. 15:42.

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption [aphtharsia]."- 1 Cor. 15:50.

"The dead shall be raised incorruptible [aphthartos]."- 1 Cor. 15:52.

"This corruptible must put on incorruption [aphtharsia]."- 1 Cor. 15:53.

"When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption [aphtharsia]."- 1 Cor. 15:54.

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity [aphtharsia - incorruptness]."- Eph. 6:24.

"Now unto the King eternal, immortal [aphthartos - incorruptible], invisible, the only wise God." -1 Tim. 1:17

"Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality [aphtharsia - incorruption] to light through the Gospel." - 2 Tim. 1:10

"In doctrine showing uncorruptness [adiaphthoria]; gravity sincerity [aphtharsia-incorruption]." - Titus 2:7.\*

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\*In Titus 2:7 aphtharsia is omitted by the best authorities -- adiaphthoria (aphthoria according to Westcott and Hort) is very similar in derivation and meaning.

"To an inheritance incorruptible [aphthartos], and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." - 1 Pet. 1:4.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible [aphthartos]." - 1 Pet. 1:23.

"That which is not corruptible [aphthartos], even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." - 1 Pet. 3:4.

### **Incorruption may Refer to Character**

From the above Scriptural usage of these two words, athanasia and aphtharsia (and its adjective aphthartos) the following distinctions will be noted:

(1) Athanasia (immortality) in each of the three passages in which it occurs, refers to sentient beings, whereas this is not always the case with Aphtharsia (incorruption).

(2) Athanasia not only refers only to sentient beings, but in each instance refers to the life principle by which their organisms are animated.

Aphtharsia, on the contrary, in those instances in which it is applied to sentient beings, "does not refer to the life principle, but to either their organisms or characters. For example, in Rom. 1:23, the Apostle may be referring to the fact that the organism or body of Jehovah is incapable of decay, or he may be referring (and it is our thought that he is referring) to the fact that the moral worth (the character) of Jehovah is of such excellent quality as to be impossible to corrupt. In any case the Apostle is not referring to God's deathlessness; had he desired to do so, he would have used the word Athanasia.

(3) Aphtharsia while sometimes referring to sentient beings, does not, always do so, but in several instances refers to inanimate things such as the Christian's crown (1 Cor. 9:25), his inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4), the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit (1 Pet. 3:4), the quality of love possessed by believers still in the flesh (Eph. 6:24), etc. It is possible, gloriously possible, for believers, here and now, to love our Lord Jesus (yes, and each other too), with incorruptness, but all can see that the word immortality would be quite out of place in this connection.

## **Our Lord's Flesh Incorruptible but not Immortal**

Perhaps it may further assist us to a proper distinction between these two words if we call to mind what the-Scriptures say with respect to our Lord's flesh. They declare that it should not see corruption (Acts 2:27, 31; 13:35), yet nowhere do they speak of it as immortal. Students of the Bible well know that it would be a denial of the doctrine of the Ransom to intelligently hold that it is now animated by any principle of life whatever, inherent or sustained, yet none the less it is or was incorruptible. It was not permitted to undergo the loathsome process of decay. What became of it we do not know, except that it did not decay. Doubtless all our readers will remember Brother Russell's observation: "Whether it was dissolved into gases or whether it is still preserved somewhere as the grand memorial of God's love, of Christ's obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows;-nor is such knowledge necessary. That God did miraculously hide the body of Moses, we are assured (Deut. 34:6 Jude 9); and that as a **memorial** God did miraculously preserve from corruption the manna in the golden bowl, which was placed in the Ark tunder the Mercy Seat in the Tabernacle, and that it was a symbol of our Lord's flesh, the bread from heaven, we also know. (Exod. 16:20, 33; Heb. 9:4; John 6:51-58.) Hence it will not surprise us if, in the Kingdom, God shall show to the world the body of flesh, crucified for all in giving the ransom on their behalf -- not permitted to corrupt, but preserved as an everlasting testimony of infinite love and perfect obedience. It is at least possible that John 19:37 and Zech. 12:10 may have such a fulfillment. Those who cried, 'Crucify Him!' may yet, as witnesses, identify the very body pierced by the spear and torn by the nails and, thorns." -- Scripture Studies, Vol. II, pp. B129, B130.

## **The Church to be both Incorruptible and Immortal**

In one celebrated passage the Apostle uses both words, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption [aphtharsia],, and this mortal must put on immortality [athanasia]. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption [aphtharsia], and this mortal shall have put on immortality [athanasia], then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' (1 Cor. 15:53, 54.) If the word "incorruption" meant precisely the same as the word "immortality," the Apostle would be multiplying words to no purpose. On the contrary we understand him to be distinguishing between them. It is as though he were to say: When this organism which is capable of decay gives place to one that is not, and when this life principle which is one that is sustained gives place to one that is inherent, then shall be brought to pass, etc.

## **Let Us by Patient Continuance in Well-doing Seek a Character Incorruptible**

With these distinctions 'in mind and giving consideration also to the context, we are led to the following conclusions with regard to Rom. 2:7:

- (1) The word immortality in the Authorized Version is more properly translated "incorruption" or "incorruptibility. (See Emphatic Diaglott, American Revised Version, Strong's Concordance, - etc.)
- (2) Since Aphtharsia is the word used (not Athanasia) the Apostle cannot be referring to the **life** principle which animates the organisms of Divine beings.
- (3) While Aphtharsia never refers to a life principle inherent or sustained, but sometimes refers

Lo the organism of living beings, yet it does not always do even this, but in several instances refers to inanimate things. In the October 1st "Herald" we quoted an eminent writer to the effect that the context in which this verse appears would seem to require that the word be regarded as an adjective employed to qualify the nouns, glory and honor. This suggestion seems not unreasonable to us especially as a paraphrase, although the fact that it is the noun (aphtharsia) not the adjective (aphthartos) that is used is not in its favor as a literal translation. However, the essential thought would not be very different if, as we have seen is permissible; we regard the incorruptibility sought by patient continuance in well doing to be an incorruptibility of character. It is certainly true that some men seek glory and honor from each other. (John 5:44.) Such glory and honor is capable of and soon experiences decay. Other men by patient continuance in well doing may be said to seek the glory and honor that is incorruptible, incapable of decay, or if the other view be taken, they may be said to seek glory and honor and a third thing, namely a crystallized character incapable of corruption. Surely such a character will be the possession of all, on whatever plane of existence, who are counted worthy of eternal life. Ultimately, if they persist in such seeking, they will either in this life or the next, meet with the Gospel and receive the grace necessary to embrace it. By embracing the gracious provisions of the Gospel they will secure the incorruptible glory and honor they sought (or if we take the other view, they will secure the glory and honor and the incorruptible character they sought). They will also receive eternal life. It is true that some of these (the faithful overcomers of the Gospel Age, the Little Flock, the Church) will receive eternal life on the highest plane of existence, namely the Divine plane. Such will indeed be possessors of immortality. This, however, is in our opinion, entirely outside the scope of the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans.

- P. L. Read.

## Recently Deceased

Mr. J. C. Adolph Bischoff, St. Louis, Mo. - (July).  
Mrs. Janet Ainsley, Northumberland, Eng. - (June).  
Mrs. Alice Thornton Crouch, Los Angeles, Cal. - (June).  
Mrs. Maud, Davis, E. Liverpool, O. - (June).  
Mrs. Magdalen Gaylord, Hollywood, Cal. - (June).  
Mr. F. H. Johnson, Minneapolis, Minn. - (July).  
Mrs. S. Lauper, Degersheim, Switzerland-(August, 1947).  
Mrs. Emily Mary Person, Spokane, Wash. - (April).  
Mr. H. D. White, Waukesha, Wis. - (June).  
Mr. F. W. Wilcox, Lackawanna, N. Y. - (June).

## **The Shepherd's Care** **GOD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY**

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." - Psa. 23:6.*

VIEWING the lessons of this most precious Psalm as being drawn from the daily life of a shepherd and his sheep, the words above seem to suggest the ending of a day's experiences. The sheep have all been led home and are safely sheltered in the fold. There would perhaps be no thought in David's mind in those days, when as a youth he tended his father's sheep, of associating those scenes of shepherd life with his own experiences in being led and cared for by Jehovah. Long years, however, passed by. The shepherd life had long since ceased. The shepherd lad had, in the divine providence, become a king, and had grown old in the service of Jehovah and his people. He had passed through many and varied scenes of mingled joy and sorrow. As he looked back over the long years of his earthly pilgrimage, the memories of his shepherd life became vivid and fresh to his mind, and he was moved by inspiration to make use of his experiences in caring for his sheep to describe in song his own life of faith and trust in God—little thinking of the help, the comfort, the encouragement the words would be to the Lord's followers during the nearly thirty centuries of human history that have elapsed since. He no longer thinks of himself as the shepherd caring for the sheep, protecting them from danger, and supplying all their varied wants. The figure is reversed and he now thinks of himself as one of the sheep, that has all his life long been cared for by the Great Shepherd, Jehovah; and as his mind turns backward over the long years, and as he realizes how God's goodness and mercy have followed him, he endeavors to peer into the dim, unknown future, and with a confidence begotten of long experience, he says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the [remaining] days of my life."

It is only when we give close attention to these closing words of this most wonderful song of songs, that we fully realize that it must have been composed at a late period in David's life. They are the heart utterances of one, who had experienced many of the trials and adversities as well as blessings that inevitably make up this life on earth; they express a maturity of experience not compatible with the earlier stages of the life of faith. That which is most apparent, however, is the fact that the author of the Psalm had learned through these experiences the weakness of fallen human nature, and the need of divine mercy and grace. He had learned how to obtain this mercy and to find grace to help in his time of need. The words of the Psalm clearly show also that the writer realized the providence of Jehovah—he realized that he was being specially dealt with by him, and that all the trials, adversities, and blessings were accomplishing a character development, fitting him for a future life. He was one of the "great cloud of witnesses" mentioned in Heb. 12:1; one of those who "endured as seeing him who is invisible"; one of those who "died in the faith," and who will be rewarded in the "better resurrection."

### **TESTED AND PROVED THE SHEPHERD'S POWER**

The words, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," as applied to the Lord's sheep of spiritual Israel, express the feelings and sentiments of those who have experienced a considerable measure of the blessedness of the "life that is hid with Christ in God"; they express the sentiments of those who have come in contact with the many trials and tribulations that lie in the narrow pathway that leads to life, to immortality—the pathway that is marked by the footprints of the Good Shepherd, who trod the way before his sheep. These closing words of the Psalm describe the experience of one who has learned good by coming in contact with evil, and who perhaps for a time was overcome by it. It describes the experience of one who,

amid the varied scenes of human life, has fully tested and proved the Shepherd's power to deliver, as well as the shepherd-graces -- the goodness and mercy of the Lord, of whom he sings. It seems very apparent that the words of this Psalm were first sung by one who had suffered deeply; one who had tasted of life's bitter, as well as of its sweet.

"We are told in Persian story, of a vizier who dedicated one apartment of his palace to the memory of earlier days, ere royal caprice had lifted him from lowliness to honor. There, in a tiny room with bare floors, was the simple equipment of shepherd life -- the crook, the wallet, the coarse dress, the water cruse; and there he spent a part of each day, remembering what he had been, as an antidote to those temptations which beset men in the dazzling light of royal or popular favor. So David the king did not forget David the shepherd boy. There was a chamber in his heart whither he was wont to retire to meditate and pray; and there it was that he composed this Psalm, in which the mature experience of his manhood blends with, the vivid memory of a boyhood spent among the sheep."

The power to bless, to heal, to work deliverance, is expressed in the Psalm as coming, not from man, but from God. Indeed, every utterance of the Psalm tells us what God will do -- what he is doing for the soul that trusts, that confides in him. The entire Psalm expresses the divine providential overruling and care. Every sentence is an expression of the singer's trust and confidence in the great Jehovah God. David is speaking of a real experience, not a beautiful, lofty ideal that can never be realized. He most firmly believed that the great Jehovah was deeply interested in all his affairs; that he was full of compassion for him; that he remembered in mercy the weaknesses of his fallen nature, and that like as a father he pitied his children, even those who feared and desired to please him.

The Psalm means even more to spiritual Israel than to "Israel after the flesh." To spiritual Israel of the Gospel Age, the Psalm speaks of the infinite goodness, the tender mercy, the long-suffering and patience of a loving Father. It teaches the blessed privilege of a life of faith, of intimate fellowship, and of daily communion with the great Shepherd. The words, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," describe a confidence and trust possessed by one who has learned to depend upon God, learned to yield the will to him in the daily providences of life, learned to take him at his word and to "*know*" that all things work together for good to them that love God, to the called according to his purpose."

The Psalmist says, "Surely *goodness* and *mercy* shall follow me all the days of my life." How often does David link these two words together. "The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting." One has said, "There never will come a day throughout all the future in which we shall not have the two guardian angels, heavenly escorts, and God-sent messengers, *Goodness and Mercy*, who have been told of and commissioned to attend the believer during all the days of his earthly pilgrimage. When, benumbed with cold, and bewildered with the mist which has suddenly settled down upon his track, the traveler across the highland moor sinks down exhausted on the drenched herbage, what an infinite comfort it is, through a momentary rent in the mist, to get a glimpse of a plaided figure of a shepherd close beside him; or to discover two servants from the distant paternal home, sent out to scour the hills in search of the missing one, and to bring him safely to its shelter and warmth! But it is in some such way as this that the eye of the believer may detect, in moments of weariness and solitude, the presence of those twin angels of *God-Goodness and Mercy*."

Goodness -- who can define it? Even when applied to man in dealing with his fellow it is difficult -- yes, impossible to sum up, all that is embodied in this one word. But it is God's goodness to imperfect ones who fear, reverence him that David speaks of. Perhaps we can get a faint idea of

its meaning when we consider that it comprehends in a figure everything done by the earthly shepherd for his own sheep-his supplying all their wants; his leading them into green pastures; his finding for them quiet waters to quench their thirst, and to rest beside; his leading them home; his tending specially to the needs of the tired, the wounded; and his furnishing shelter for them at night. The word "goodness" comprehends every thing in connection with the Lord's dealings with his sheep for their good. It exhibits his kindness, his benevolence, and benignity of heart manifested in his gifts of grace and correction and discipline. Goodness and Mercy -- not goodness only, but mercy as well. It may be truthfully said that the quality of mercy is comprehended in goodness, and yet mercy possesses a characteristic distinct in itself. Mercy is defined as that benevolence, mildness, tenderness, which disposes a person to overlook injuries, or to treat an offender better than he deserves. It is the disposition that tempers justice, and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries and to forbear punishment, *or* inflict less than the law or justice will warrant. It is said that in this sense there is 'perhaps no word in our language precisely synonymous with mercy. That which comes the nearest to it is *grace*. It implies benevolence, tenderness, mildness, pity or compassion, and clemency, but exercised only to offenders. Mercy is a distinguishing attribute of God. "The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression and [yet] by no means clearing the guilty."

### **"HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF HIS KINDNESS"**

Goodness and Mercy -- one has called them the celestial escort of the Christian on his journey to the New Jerusalem. Mercy is spoken of as "the daughter of God -- his delight -- 'He delighteth in Mercy'; his wealth -- 'He is rich in mercy'; his throne -- 'I will commune with thee from off the mercy seat.'" They *follow* the sheep, while the shepherd always leads them. Goodness and Mercy are like the shepherd's watchdogs that bring up the rear. They constitute a rearguard, as it were, to protect against the wolves that sometimes follow in the rear. One who likens goodness and mercy to guardian angels has beautifully expressed the relationship these two attributes of God sustain to the Lord's sheep: "We have two strong helpers to lift us from tier to tier of the pyramid of life, keeping us from falling backward, whispering words of comfort, and placing strong hands under our arms in circumstances of difficulty and stumbling.

"In that word *follow*, it is possible that there is a suggestion that we are going away from God, and that he sends his goodness and mercy after us to call us back. It may be so. If a prodigal leaves a widowed mother for the sea, she never forgets him; her prayers and tears and loving thoughts follow him; and to win him back she sends out only the tenderest yearnings of a heart almost crushed. Even so with God and his own; they may wander from him, but he follows them. He sets Goodness and Mercy on their track. Sometimes it seems as if disaster on disaster, stroke on stroke, pursues them; but it is not really so. Things are not always as they seem. And these are but the disguises which Goodness and Mercy assume; their outer garb, protecting the delicate woolen garments which are prepared for the weary head and tired limbs of the wearied, wandering, starved and ragged prodigal. He will not break off his kindness; nor suffer his faithfulness to fail; nor forsake the works of his hands; 'for his mercy endureth forever.'"

"*Surely*," his goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Does not the Psalmist speak too confidently? Some may say, It was all right for him, but it would hardly be proper for us to so speak. We refer such to St. Paul, who not only speaks for himself, but for all the Lord's followers: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love



of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." - Rom. 8:31-39.

God's goodness and mercy will follow us all our days. We may, like David's sheep, wander from the path of righteousness; we may not appreciate, or we may neglect his loving-kindness and tender mercy; we may for a time ignore the presence of these guardian angels; we may even think that they are gone; but if we turn, we shall still find them there, with wistful longing looks, expressing their desires that we call upon them for help. "Surely" -- because he has said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee"; "surely" -- because long and varied experiences have attested this to be a fact; "surely" - because, as one has truthfully said, "If he has set his love on us in eternity, he is not likely to forget us in time. So surely shall never a day come in our earthly pilgrimage, in which God shall not be at our side in goodness and mercy." "He that hath begun a good work in us, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." "Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end."

"And I will dwell in the house of the Lord, for ever." The shepherd song is finished; the sheep are all at rest -- safe in the Good Shepherd's fold. Home at last! "What a magic power there is in that word, *home*. It will draw the wanderer from the ends of the earth. It will nerve sailor, and soldier, and explorer to heroic endurance. It will melt with its dear memories the hardened criminal. It will bring a film of tears over the eyes of the man of the world."

"Be it ever so humble  
There's no place like home."

As we review the words of this Psalm of Psalms, we see that it teaches that the lives of the Lord's sheep are full of changes. The great and final "change will soon be upon us, and we will then be ushered into our eternal Home. There can be no doubt that the changes of the present life are all needed to fit us for that heavenly Home and its occupations. This earthly house has in one sense ceased to be a home of the Christian. The words of the Christian poet, "I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home," have not ceased to be true. As the Christian journeys through the many and varied scenes of this present life and draws near to its close, he begins to realize how brief it has been, and he more and more becomes conscious that this is not his home.

The expression, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," reminds us, not only of our future Home, but of the eternity of that Home also. This expression comes nearest in its meaning to the Master's words, spoken when he was about to part with his beloved disciples: "In my Father's house are many mansions" -- abodes, dwelling places, as some translate the word. It was a home, an eternal home that he went away to prepare for his beloved followers. Those who have come to better understand our heavenly Father's great Plan -- that it is designed in its further unfolding to make known his wonderful love to all the rest of mankind in his own due time-have a much clearer conception of what is meant by the "place prepared for you," as well as of what the experiences and employments of that eternal home will be, than others who have not yet had such knowledge imparted to them. These have come to see that heaven will be for the joint-heirs only, and that it will not be a place of inactivity, but that then the real life of service in its deeper sense will begin. This does not mean that there are no services here in our earthly state to perform, services of many kinds, 'but the services of the present life, while they bring comfort and help to

others, are designed more to mould us into vessels, fit instruments for more effectual service over there.

For those who become associated with Christ as joint-heirs in the Holy City, the 'New Jerusalem government, there will be the great and blessed service to perform of restoring, of bringing humanity into the knowledge and enjoyment of the Father's great love, and preparing them to enjoy an eternal home on a renewed earth. The "mansion" in the "Father's house" that is being prepared by the Divine Master for his footstep followers, whatever this word "mansion" may signify, will be on the divine, heavenly, spirit plane of being. It will, in a much deeper sense, comprehend all the blessed fellowships, all the joys that make-up the happy homes here on earth, with nothing to disturb or mar its bliss. These enjoyments will begin with the great Home-gathering, which will be in the "First Resurrection," and will constitute the meeting together for the first time of all the Father's children, all the blood-washed company, in the mansion prepared for them in the Father's house.

This gathering is mentioned by the Apostle as the "general assembly of the Church of the firstborn ones whose names are written in heaven" into their everlasting dwelling, to go no more out forever. One of its greatest blessings will be to see him face to face-him whom by faith we learned to love while here in our pilgrimage on earth-our Good Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep, who led us, who shepherded us, and who cared for us all the days of our journey thither. It will be then that we shall be made like him. Many of us have experienced something of the enjoyments of home-gatherings here below, when after months, or perhaps years of separation, we meet as members of one family once again in the old homestead of our childhood and youthful days. Such occasions sometimes take place in connection with the anniversary of the father or mother's natal day. First, perhaps, will come the boy from school who has been absent from home but a few months; then the one who for years has been a wanderer over the earth; and one by one the whole family are gathered to renew for a brief season the fellowships and joys of home associations, to meet father and mother, to mingle again as an unbroken family. Ah, these are joyous occasions, happy reunions, precious seasons, but these occasions are transient-the separation moment soon comes, hearts are made sad, the farewells are said, and the reunion breaks up, perhaps never to meet as an unbroken family again. The inevitable changes of the present life come, and at the next gathering, there is a vacant chair; a loved one, perhaps a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, has gone the way of all the earth, never more to meet in these earthly festivities. Or the next gathering may be to mingle their tears together in recent bereavement, to look into the pale silent features of a loved one most dear, and to follow the form with bowed heads and sad hearts to the silent city of the dead.

### **WHAT A GATHERING OF THE FAITHFUL THAT WILL BE**

Oh, how different will it be in that great Home gathering beyond when we shall meet those we have fellowshiped with and learned to love, as we walked together and sought to assist one another in the narrow way that led to that eternal Home! Oh, what a gathering that will be when the last child has reached the Father's Home, and the whole heavenly family meet and greet each other! Never again to part! Never again to break up the happy and glorious home festival!

Once we thought that the joy and happiness of that gathering would be marred; once we thought others whom we loved and mingled with on earth, but who never entered the narrow way that led us to our heavenly Home, would be cut off forever from knowing of God's love, from realizing his favor. But now how different! Since we have been privileged to understand our Heavenly Father's plans and purposes better, and have learned that the gift of his well-beloved Son opened the way for the awakening of these from the sleep of death, opened the way for them to reunite

again on earth, and opened the way for them to learn of the great unfathomable love of God, we have come to see that not the least of our joy will be to see these as the "ransomed of the Lord return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," to "obtain joy and gladness," and to realize that all sorrow and sighing have fled away forever. (Isa. 35:10.) "Even on the earthly side, what reunion of hearts and exchanges of happy gratulations shall crown and crowd that glad day! What glorious meetings and triumphs will then be celebrated. . . Earth has been the theatre of some splendid victories, the fame of which has filled the world and echoed along the corridors of ages. But never has earth witnessed such a triumph as shall occur on that day. Then shall be enacted another Genesis, more glorious than the first. Then shall be performed another Exodus, more illustrious than that which Moses led; then shall truth triumph over error, and faith over unbelief, humility over pride, life over death." Then shall God "wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

In closing this series of this most wonderful shepherd song, will it not be well for us to ask ourselves, Are we realizing the blessed privileges therein portrayed? In a very deep and important sense, the life we shall live and enjoy over there, begins here in our life on earth. Heaven begins when we first come to know him, who said, "In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you." From the time that *we* first experience the blessing of forgiveness, of favor, and begin to walk in the narrow way of life, we may realize in a measure some of the experiences of the "Kingdom of God, which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the holy spirit." As we make progress in following our Good Shepherd, as we grow older and learn by experience in the walk of faith, the goodness and mercy, the protection and loving care, the long-suffering and providential overruling of the Great Shepherd; as we more and more realize when we look back over the way, that he has been with us all the days, sunny days, cloudy days, days of joy, days of sorrow, days of trial, days of toil, days of weariness, we are enabled with the sweet singer of Israel to say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me-all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever.*"

- R. E. Streeter.

## **Holding the Profession of Our Faith**

*"Having an High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the (profession of our faith without wavering." - Heb. 10:19-39.*

THE EXPRESSION by the writer to the Hebrews, "our bodies washed with pure water," has occasioned much discussion among expositors. It will be remembered that in the court was placed a laver filled with water at which the priest washed, and also at which the sacrifice was washed, in each case symbolizing the purity of the individual. The bullock, which represented our great Head, was not so washed because it represented One already perfect, clean, free from any defect and so not needing this ablution. This custom commonly prevailed among the heathen also, for historians tell us that at the entrance of their temples was a vessel of consecrated water in which was placed in some cases a . branch of laurel with which the priest sprinkled the worshipers. This water, even with them, must be clean and pure, and was therefore drawn from springs and wells and not -taken from ponds or other open places. Sea water, because of the salt contained in it, was regarded as especially appropriate.

Ezekiel too says, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and all your idols will I cleanse you." This is in connection with the promised restoration of the Jewish people in the next Age, for he further says, "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you. . . . And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." (Ezek. 36:26, 27.) It was from the pagan religion that the custom passed into the Roman Catholic Church, where is placed at the entrance to their churches a basin of water that the worshiper may cross himself.

### **LAYING ASIDE EVERY WEIGHT**

The same Apostle in writing to the Ephesians (Eph. 5:25, 26) says that "Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." The thought would seem thus to emphasize the previous one-that of "having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience" -- rendered pure. We must be in God's sight free from the filth and pollution of the world, for in drawing near unto him we must divest ourselves of all impediments, one by one as we, under the influence of the holy spirit, travel this new and living way. The road grows more narrow and straight, more rugged as though traveling a mountain path; the things of the world hamper us more and more, and as our character develops we recognize as a hindrance today the thing which did not seem so in the days that are past. Thus we cast them aside, with only the robe of Christ's righteousness for a covering, until we appear in the presence of God. Many friends filled the way in the early days, abundance of fellowship, great rejoicing, but as the tests have come, one by one, there has also come a falling away, fewer and fewer we find able and willing to climb where "sometimes the shadows are deep, and rough seems the path to the goal," where "sometimes so long seems the day and sometimes so heavy our feet; but, toiling in life's dusty way, the Rock's blessed shadow, how sweet!"

In this narrow way we find, as in the grand gallery of the pyramid, room enough for "My Lord and me." And as we travel on with our minds set upon the goal, may we recall his promise, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." May we sing with the poet:

"Love did for my sin atone;  
I shall live through Christ alone.  
I need fear no evil thing,  
While by simple faith I cling."

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering." To secure this was the object of this whole Epistle -- to convince them that their old system was transitory, designed to pass away, and that every good thing attained through it was more abundantly contained in the new system established by the antitypical High Priest-a system which was designed to be permanent, and if they would only hold fast the profession of their faith a little longer, if they would turn a deaf ear to their seducers, they would attain unto the promised blessings and escape the inevitable fate to be meted out to those who should turn back unto perdition.

The same argument holds today-the same rewards for the faithful, the same rewards for the unfaithful, the same Savior, the same taking out from among the nations a people for his name-a bride, a body, a priesthood, a little flock. What visions of the future 'blessings are in these names! To the overcomer he will give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." With these assurances "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith, for he is faithful that promised." Let us give diligence "to make our calling and election sure: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." - 2 Pet. 1:10, 11.

### **BUILDING UP ANOTHER UP**

The Apostle's next injunction, "Let us consider one another" is one which the Church of today might well take to heart. Consideration one for another seems to be but little manifested; but instead of considering one another to provoke unto love we find much which bespeaks the opposite, and the injunction is surely timely. Criticism of others of like faith may create a rancor which may possibly eat into the heart, and like the little foxes destroy the vine. Evil surmising and gossip may quench the smoking flax or destroy the broken reed. Our mission is to build one another up in the holy faith rather than to tear down; to comfort and help rather than to distress and destroy. All are not of the stature of a man, some are still in the class of babes and need the help of the more advanced in the walk of the Christian life. Rancor in the soul of man prevents his growth and development. We are our brother's keeper and answerable to God so far as we fail in our privilege of lifting one another up, helping on toward that love which is the bond of perfectness.

For this reason we find it profitable to forsake not the assembling of ourselves together. While each is responsible to God for his own conduct, fellowship and exchange of experience assist in our progress in the higher life. The word assemble in the original means to gather together for the purpose of worshiping God. Herein we know from experience the benefits of such assembling. They are like water and sunshine and air to the physical organism. And he who neglects these means of grace is like the plant transferred from the open sunlight to the dark of the cellar. Spiritual growth soon ceases and our vital forces decline. The most virile of God's people are found among those who assemble whenever it is possible. Our attendance, to a certain extent, is the measure of our growth in spiritual things. We find some exceptions to this in those who are prevented by insurmountable difficulties. These seem to be especially blessed if their desires in this direction are strong. God is able to provide for his own. Let us remember such in our petitions to the throne of grace.

In this assembling ourselves we have greater opportunities for exhorting one another, as the Apostle bids us. This also is a profitable means toward the end, that is, the development of character, and this seems "the more so as we see the day approaching." This expression has given rise to a diversity of opinion, some claiming that the writer had in mind the coming day of trouble upon the Jewish people, and others that it refers to the second coming of our Lord. The construction of the sentence permits of either interpretation. Some remarkable occurrence was anticipated, and since these Christians had been Jews, and since their danger was that of falling back again into the old errors, the expiring system of their old faith, it may be argued that the writer was holding up to their vision this great calamity, and pointing out to them the foolishness of going over to a system which had been cast off from favor by our Lord and upon which he had pronounced a curse. It may not be unlikely that this was the prime meaning so far as these were concerned to whom this epistle was addressed.

### **"WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS"**

But does it not seem also that there was a prophetic note in the warning which should apply to those of the Lord's people who would be living in an age when there would be signs of his presence, his second presence. These signs of his presence seem very definite, and we are bidden to lift up our heads and rejoice when we see them for then our deliverance draweth near. This second presence is surely an important matter to the Lord's consecrated. Is the thought not enough to make us heedful of our conduct? What manner of persons ought we to be? Ought we to be backbiting, and accusing one another? Can the Lord's people strive and still be the Lord's people? Does it not make us fear as we look about us? Do we not fear as we endeavor to work out our salvation with the Lord's help?

For many years we have heard that the time is short. Can we not see the gradual unfolding of God's Plan, his stately stepplings along the corridors of time? Do we not hear the rumbling of the coming storm, louder and louder, until we can see the swaying and bending of the present order of things in all its avenues, like the trees of the forest in the line of the advancing tornado! The Lord is not slack concerning his promises and do we not see "the elements beginning to melt with fervent heat"? Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. Can we be blameless if we permit the old nature to rise to the ascendancy? Can we be dead and our lives hid with Christ in God if we allow our minds to be set upon the things of the flesh? Must we not put to the death the old nature? Then how can Christians strive? We cannot if we have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. If we do these things after we have received the knowledge of the truth are we not in danger of a willful sin?

The Christian who should apostatize to Judaism placed himself without the bounds of Christian grace. Since he had come to a knowledge of the truth then due, he was beyond the reach of the Judaic system, the obsolete order which must give way to the new and living way, and he had nothing left but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.

Comparing him with one who despised Moses' law, and suffered death, the Apostle says, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye,; shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son' of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy-thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" Apostatizing from the Christian faith of that day is comparable to going back into the world in this day. It is not difficult to tread under foot the Son of God today. Sins of omission may cost us our crown, and we may become castaways, not "more than overcomers." Willful sin will cost us our inheritance. "To him that

overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." "I will recompense saith the Lord." And again, "the Lord shall judge his people."

### **EXPERIENCE PROVES HIS SUPERVISION**

Let us call to remembrance the former days, in which "after we were enlightened, we endured a great fight of afflictions," those early days in our Christian life when we started out with confidence and hope, joyous in the prospects before us, confident in the full assurance of faith, those days when we seemed surrounded and protected by an influence which must have been divine. We seemed like the little one learning to walk-all obstacles and blocks of stumbling were removed from the pathway, there were no storms and the skies were cloudless, and we felt that we could conquer life with God's help. We rejoiced in our new relationship and our enthusiasm ran high.

These were the days of preparation for the struggle of life, and as we developed a measure of strength, the trials began to come. The Adversary was permitted to test us perhaps as job was tested; doubts came to our minds concerning some of those things which had seemed settled beyond dispute. We questioned our consecration, our part in the divine Plan, though not the Plan itself, for, we believed firmly that God had a beautiful and wonderful arrangement for the world's salvation, but we felt we were not worthy of 'a share in it. These and other things intruded upon our minds until the temptation began to come that we could not qualify and had better cease the struggle, for it was not for us. We remember how these, and other thoughts, came to us to disturb and distress; we remember, too, how by the guidance of his holy spirit we were led again into the light and how we rejoiced in the victory; stronger for the experience; how again and again these days came upon us, and, how again and again we came off conquerors by his grace, for he had promised, that with each temptation a way of 'escape would be provided, that he would not suffer us to be tempted beyond endurance. These things are something like the ballast in the hold of the vessel, they keep us from getting heady. "He that over cometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over -the nations"; "and I will confess his name before my Father and before his, angels."

Our experiences in the way have served to prove his supervision over us. The trials have not been joyous at the time, but we have learned to count all but loss and dross, and our faith in God increases with each of these experiences. We therefore cast not away our confidence which bath great recompense of reward, both here, in the peace and joy of, life, and hereafter, because of our promised inheritance. These things must be borne with patience that after we have done the will of God, we might receive the promise. Patient endurance of affliction is necessary if we would become joint-heirs with Jesus, Christ. To such is our Savior's promise, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the, temple of my God and he shall go no more out and I will write upon him my new name."

"Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Is it possible that any can draw back after having been received into this heavenly relationship? It must be so or the Apostle would not have expressed, such a possibility. May we apply the 'lessons of this' epistle to our own lives. Is there anything which can separate us from the love of God? "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth; nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Only by our own delinquencies can this be accomplished.. "In all these things we are more than conquerors. through him that loved us." - Rom. 8:37-39.



"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne even as I also overcame, and am, set down with my Father in his throne." This can be only if "we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul."

"The bird let loose in Eastern skies,  
When hastening fondly home,  
Ne'er stoops to earth her wing, nor flies  
Where idle warblers roam.  
But high she shoots, through air and light,  
Above all low delay,  
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight  
*Nor* shadow dims her way.

"So grant me, God, from every care  
And stain of passion free  
Aloft, through virtue's purer air,  
To hold my course to Thee!  
No sun to cloud, no lure to stay  
My soul, as home she springs.  
The sunshine on her joyful way,  
Thy freedom in her wing.

- *S. D. Bennett.*