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## Christ's Knowledge of Our Heart Sincerity

*"Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love thee." - John 21:17.*

THE SWEETEST and most inspiring thought that a Christian can hold in his heart as he faces life's responsibilities is that God knows the sincerity of his heart devotions. To be able to look up into the face of God and confess amid all the fluctuating experiences of one's life. "Thou knowest that I love Thee," is to know a refuge and a place of rest for every glad and every troubled hour in life. It is a precious thing to remember in hours of vigorous and prosperous spiritual life, that God knows the sincerity of our love for him; for do we not feel at such times a sense of utter, inability to express the depth of love that abides in our hearts for him. But particularly precious is this, assurance that he knoweth all things concerning our affection for him, when we have wretchedly failed to demonstrate that degree of love by some sad mistake in word or act. It is then that this refuge seems most wonderfully sweet. At times when we seem lifted up into some fresh vision of the greatness of God's love to us, and we try with our feeble words to express our joy and gratitude, how often we have found "this poor lisping, stammering tongue" just falling back on these words coined by such a heart long ago, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." But when we have fallen in some crisis hour, and failed to attain a victory we had so confidently expected to have to our credit, and after trying to express some self justifications, and to make some apologies for our failure, being painfully humiliated because we stumbled so-ah then, how our heart has fled to this refuge as its final source of comfort: "Thou knowest that I love thee."

It is the blessed inheritance of every loving Christian heart to claim this refuge; and to realize that in it he possesses this last and this greatest haven of love, this final court of appeal God's knowledge of the sincerity of our hearts. What a boon it is! As we attempt to live out our consecrated lives today, endeavoring to express our devotion to God as best we can, most of us encounter plenty of that foretold opposition promised all faithful believers. How often we would be crushed under it if we did not remember that God knows all about us.

Many elements enter into the experiences of God's people in days like these. All about us we may see the fulfillments of prophecy pointing out these last days as a time of special trial for the saints of God. From all three quarters, the world, the flesh, and the devil, influences are emanating which might well discourage even the most valiant heart, and would do so if it did not find faith

strengthened by the assurance that God knows, and loves, and cares. But among the peculiar and particularly severe testings of this present hour, there is a prevailing sentiment a skepticism or doubting of the personal sincerity of others. We live in a world in which distrust, and the spirit of competition is rife, and these very influences all around us, seemingly in the very air, are sure to "try all them that dwell on the face of the earth," including the professed people of God. The spirit in the world is today a spirit of alertness, ready at an instant to spring into life and ripen rapidly into suspicion. To be on guard against others becomes in time so fixed a habit that the love which "thinketh no evil," and which "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth," ceases to be manifested in circles where above all others it should abound. Under such circumstances what a refuge tried and afflicted hearts may find in the confidence that they can come into the presence of him who knows all things, and say to him, "Thou *knowest* that I love thee."

### **OFTENTIMES MISREPRESENTING OURSELVES**

It cannot be denied that we are sometimes our own worst enemy. By a decidedly wrong course persisted in we become a worse enemy to ourselves than any other could be. But it often happens that while earnestly desiring to bring all our ways into full accord with the will of God, our lives come far short of expressing "the beauties of true holiness," and we are conscious of the fact. At such times what consolation there is for the conscientious heart in the assurance that God knows how much we wanted to "live and speak and act aright," and how deeply we feel the sense of humiliating failure.

In the effort to live our lives in the midst of present conditions, to bear unmoved the unfavorable judgments, which in some measure perhaps we have brought upon ourselves, we meet the difficulty of trying to make our true self known to others. There are many difficulties encountered in having our motives properly interpreted. Motives we have examined as in the presence of God, may seem questionable in the eyes of others because they judge by outward appearances. And many times we know they would find motives better than they thought they would, if they only understood. There are many tangled threads in every life, inevitably so because all are imperfect. "Mending and patchwork combined would describe the kind of showing most of us make; and keenly conscious of how unprofitable we are, and knowing that it is only through his abounding mercy that we are permitted to go on seeking to prove our love to him, how ready we are to ask of him,

"Dear Lord, take up my tangled threads,  
Where I have wrought in vain,  
That by the skill of Thy dear hands  
Some beauty may remain.

"Take all the failures, each mistake  
Of our poor human ways,  
Then, Savior, for Thine own dear sake,  
Make them show forth Thy praise."

And so it happens that we as often misrepresent ourselves as others misrepresent us. Our own missteps, our own blemishes, help to make our lives an enigma to others. The realization of this fact tray at times bring us a bitterness of spirit, or discouragement, because we have so wanted to live out in daily life the impress of the Spirit's inworking of the character of Christ. The sting of this bitter disappointment is in the knowledge we have of ourselves, that we are discrediting the deeper self which, beneath these failures and seeming inconsistencies, is after all our true self. We know that when, through all the faults and deficiencies we have to confess, Christ's pointed

question, "Lowest thou me more than these?" comes to us and seems to search our heart to its depths, there is that confidence within which answers back, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

How blessed to realize in such an hour that we still have left this last and greatest refuge of love, this assurance of his knowledge of our sincerity. Whatever our own poor faulty words and ways may seem to say to others, and whatever the verdict of others may be concerning us, and whatever our own memory may hold up before us of mistake and failure, we can still look up to Christ and say, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And who that really appreciates this refuge for himself, can fail to be inspired with the determination to let such love mellow, purify, strengthen, and fill his heart to overflowing with a glad conformity to the wish and prayer of Jesus that we should love and sympathize with one another even as he has continued to love and fully sympathize with us, loving us in spite of all our lamented imperfections.

### **LOVEST THOU ME MORE THAN THESE?**

The text we are considering here brings before our mind that memorable day when Jesus propounded his heart searching question to Peter. Thrice had Peter denied his association with Jesus, and thrice he is asked to affirm his love for him. And we may be sure this record has not been preserved all these years just to tell us of the over confidence and subsequent fall of this Apostle. It is all too often a portrait of our own self assurance, our own claims to love him better, and of being more loyal to him than are others. It is therefore full of needed lessons and warnings, yes, and comforting encouragements also to any who make Peter's mistake and need the same very searching but loving question brought home to them, "Lowest thou me more than these?" Peter had confidently affirmed that though all should forsake Jesus, yet he would even die with him unafraid. By inference at least he was rating himself much more faithful to Jesus than any of his fellow disciples. But to Jesus how clear it was that Satan specially desired to sift Peter out of the ranks altogether, and this boastful superiority complex expressed so boldly in Peter's claim revealed how unaware he was of the dangers besetting him.: How much he needed the warning, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

"So Simon Peter stood before his risen Lord; and thrice that awful inquisition tore its way, like a relentless search light, through the shadows and failures of his life: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' What could he say? Could he appeal to his record, and offer it in evidence as a demonstration of his love? Ah! should he try to speak of this, the memory of his own failures would choke him, the stains of his record would silence him. For he has as his portion a full share of the bitter memories of an undisciplined character immature professions of fidelity, neutralized over and over again by unbalanced words, by jealous, presumptuous, unspiritual deeds; and upon him is even now the fresh blight of that immeasurable error when, unmanned by excitement, his very life, as he stood in the high priest's palace, had seemed to breakup under him, as the ice breaks up in the spring freshet, and, heedless of consequences, lost to honor, he had repudiated his Master in the open presence of men.

"Yes, what could he say, as the search light of the Savior's inquisition ploughs its way through the shadows of his life: 'Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?' Could he appeal to his companions to speak for him, and testify on his behalf? Had they not known all the weakness of the undisciplined past, the lapse from faith when called by Jesus to walk on the water of the sea of Galilee; the jealous contention over who should be the greatest; the presumptuous, unseemly rebuke spoken to Jesus just before the Last Supper; the drowsy failure in Gethsemane, when the one request of the agonizing Jesus went unheeded, and sleep destroyed the vigil of sympathy for which Christ longed? Had they not known the story of the last desertion, its desperate, threefold,

insistence, its cowardice, its profanity? How then could he ask them to testify, when so much in the open story of his life spoke against his love for Jesus?

"Yet, in the face of these memories of an undisciplined character which forbade the appeal to his record and the appeal to his friends, this man has still a refuge, for he is a lover of Christ. The Savior's question does not convict this man of insincerity, however it may convict him of inconsistency and pierce him with penitence. 'Lovest thou me?' The words, in themselves so gentle, are keen as a surgeon's knife, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, laying bare the thoughts and intents of the heart; but, like the surgeon's knife upon the living subject, the pain they cause shows there is life and not death. 'Lovest thou me?' It is an appeal, not to his record, but to himself; not to his witnesses, but to himself; and the appeal is answered in the depths of the man's self-consciousness. He cannot deny his record; there it stands, fraught with inconsistencies, failures, weaknesses. He cannot, it may be, overcome the prejudice in the minds of others which these inconsistencies, failures, weaknesses may have excited against him; but in those depths of self-consciousness, where he knows himself as no fellow-man can know him, there is that which meets the question of Jesus, 'Lovest thou me?' with an unfaltering 'Yes.'

"But how shall he substantiate and prove that love? He cannot prove it from his record, blemished and discolored with many a failure; he cannot prove it from the vouchers of his friends, for they know too well how again and again he has been weighed in the balance of trial and found wanting. He cannot prove it by plaintive attempts to apologize for or to minimize past failures. An intuition tells him that were to weaken, not to strengthen his case. But, on the other hand, he cannot deny himself; he cannot discredit his own self-consciousness. In his self-consciousness he knows that he loves Christ. And to prove that love he has still one refuge, one appeal left the appeal to him before whom he now stands face to face, and from whom has come the question, 'Lovest thou me more than these?' So his love leaps to its heroic ultimatum, and discarding arguments, apologies, and refuges of words, appeals to him to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: 'Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. "

### **THY GENTLENESS HATH MADE ME GREAT**

How much would have been lost to us if this experience of Peter had never been written. If we are willing to just substitute our own name for that of Peter in this story of vaunted loyalty and regrettable, breach of faith, we will surely feel a greatly increased sense of gratitude to God for the gentleness with which he has disciplined us, and feel also a greater sympathy for others who may stumble in the way. Remembering the look that brought Peter to a realization of his failure, and that evidently saved him from Satan's clutch, and remembering that such tenderness on the part of Jesus has been our salvation in times of terrible deflections, surely we will find it in our hearts to emulate him in our attitude toward fellow runners in the race, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Each heart knows its own bitterness. Hidden away from the sight of others there are the fiercest struggles being waged in many a life. Beneath a surface of what may indeed appear the most circumspect conduct there may be for aught we know, the deepest realization that "in my flesh dwelleth no perfect thing." The life in which love for Christ is a sentiment so deep it cannot explain itself in words, is the life that most clearly recognizes how it has tried the patience of Christ by the shortcomings written into every day's record, When he should have found strength, there has often been a new revelation of weakness, and denial when he should have had a brave and loving evidence, of fidelity. But over all the long, years of *such* incompleteness Jesus has

gone on spreading the covering of his forgiving love. Through the, marvel of his forgiveness of our sins, through his patience, through the sorrow we ought to see oftentimes on his face as he turns and looks upon us when in the moment of weakness we have denied him, he knits our affections closer to himself. And, though we still are failing and faltering,, he makes us conscious of a deepening love for him that answers to his love for us, and, finding this love for him as the deepest and truest art of our nature, he accepts as profoundly true our heartfelt affirmation, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

"His loving kindness O how great! Who can fail to marvel over the greatness of God's loving kindness over years of stumbling and failures, such as every humbled heart freely confesses. And meditating on that loving tenderness as experienced by us, is surely calculated, to make us loving and tenderhearted in our attitude toward all God's children. In fact, the real test of our appreciation of the mercy we have had extended toward us, lies in our spontaneous exercise of this virtue where its need is greatest. To whomsoever much has been forgiven, the same loveth much, is a beautiful truth. It means that the one who is most conscious-of being in special need of forgiveness, will never fail to let the Lord know his depth of gratitude; and neither will the life fail to reveal in loving kindness to others the touch of divine compassion. Deeds are much more expressive than words. If we rejoice in the compassion, the patience, the understanding love of Jesus as he helps us along so that our faith fail not when Satan well nigh claims us, it is well that we tell him that he knows how fervently we love him. But there is still another answer he will look for, and an answer that must be just as readily given him. He is still saying to us, "Go thou and do likewise." "I have given you an example to follow, I want you to love others as I have loved you, to forgive as I have forgiven your imperfections, and to patiently bear with one another as I have borne patiently with you."

And how can we best do this? Perhaps in no better way than to just remember that the same warfare, the same sense, of defeat, the same inward joy in having a refuge in the heart of Jesus' love stirs within our brother's breast, and without which he would sink down into utter discouragement and despair. Let us believe that he too is trying faithfully to live at his very best, and perhaps is grieved deeply over the fact that successes and failures alternate so swiftly in his warfare. He too may be appearing at his worst, and be going out to weep bitterly over another inexcusable blunder, when he had wanted so much to live and *speak* and act aright. He too may be realizing that somehow his life and movements seem often stumbling against the ideas and ways of others, and he would give much to have it ordered otherwise.. Can we fail to rejoice with such an one, when, with an abiding confidence in God's knowledge of his sincerity, he turns his face upward to One who never, never misunderstands or judges unjustly, and confesses to him: "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

Ah yes! Jesus knows the glorious ideals we fain would attain. He accepts the heavenward prayers which our wearied spirits breathe out to him under the pressure of daily trials such as are common to all his saints. He knows us not only as we are, but as we mean to be. And so to ourselves, and no less to our brother, there comes such a volume of comfort in the assurance we both have of God's knowledge of-our sincerity. Precious knowledge! for how could any of us entertain any degree of assurance of being numbered among the Elect Bride of Christ, if our hearts were not fully known, and lovingly interpreted by him who weighs our pure; sincerity over against the frailties we lament? Let us then excel in reflecting the love of God as we journey on together, my brother and I, until we enter the happy abode awaiting those whose sincerity God has known to mean perfect love for him, and love for their neighbor as for themselves. Let us then remember --

"They are such dear, familiar feet that, go  
Along the path with ours -- feet fast or slow  
And trying to keep pace -- if they mistake,  
Or tread upon some flower that we would take  
Upon our breast, or bruise some reed  
Or crush poor Hope until it bleed,

We may be mute,  
Not turning quickly to impute  
Grave fault; for they and we  
Have such a little way to go -- can be  
Together such a little while along the way --  
We will, be patient while we may."

- J. J. Blackburn

## Acquainted With Grief

SO OFTEN, when the suffering and death of Jesus are being considered, the theological aspect receives undue emphasis with a consequent neglect of the practical viewpoint. Christian schools of thought tend unfortunately to center their exposition around the cold legal doctrines concerning Christ's ministry rather than explain the need of the "perfecting experiences" through which our Master passed. The reactions of affliction and trial upon his character, were such that his sacrifice not only expunged the legal guilt of mankind but prepared him for the work of re-education and reconciliation of a future Age. Meditation upon this side of the subject will enable us more clearly to see why we should follow closely in his steps, that we also might become sympathetic priests who will in due time assist the sin-stricken world back to health and life.

Had the religious and political Jewish leaders contemporary with the First Advent been familiar with all the prophecies relating to the Deliverer of Israel, they would have perceived, and instructed the people in the knowledge that the Messiah for whom they looked was not to be born into a princely environment of luxury and ease, nor -was he to be a mighty general, schooled in the arts of war. Instead they would have realized that their Messiah was to be a humble, peaceful healer, brought into the world amid the poorest circumstances, reared in a peasant home, ministering to the needs of the more contrite souls. Comparatively few of these simple folk would have understood the more intellectual side of his doctrine, but they did know that Israel had been riven by the conflicts of great empires for many generations and now into their midst had appeared One who healed as many as lay within his contact. Jesus of Nazareth, the wonderful physician, trod the rough roads of Palestine, telling forth a message of good will; preaching-of love toward God and fellow man. It was a mission which was seldom undertaken without expense to personal comfort, and often he continued his labors while weary and foot-sore. He stood out even above previous holy men who possessed the gifts of healing and prophecy, and yet for all the good that he did and said for over three years among God's chosen people, his own people, they slew him as a traitor and criminal.

Rich and poor, pious and publican, young and old, had felt the effects of his work of curing the sick and making whole those who had hitherto not known the joys of vigorous life. Cripples who had begged out their miserable existence at the temple gate for decades were bidden to rise and walk; poor sightless eyes, yet without vision of God's universe, were able to gaze into the face of the Master; deaf ears heard the voice of him who spake as yet no man had spoken, and speechless tongues were loosed to praise the Creator. Whether stricken by bodily disease or afflicted in mind, their distress was remedied, not by some freakish "cure all" which lasted an hour or day, but set the captive at liberty to enjoy the freedom of health in physique and brain which the Lifegiver had intended.

Where he had obtained the superhuman power they were ignorant, nor did they see in him the One who had come from Jehovah to turn away ungodliness from Jacob and to bind the broken hearts. They did not recognize the fulfillment of the words of God's holy Prophets and realize

that, of this One it had been said, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise-him," and they understood not that this was the "Man of Sorrows," who was despised and; rejected of men. Blindness of eye was great, loss of spiritual vision was manifestly greater in them. Yet he who could have slain all Judah, yea and the Roman garrison as well, remained calm and submissive to the bitter persecution and cruel death. - Isa. 53:3-10.

Sin had taken a severe toll of human life during the long ages, and in spite of man's relentless effort to combat disease and pain, the struggle was mostly in vain. Therefore it may seem strange to the casual observer that Jesus of Nazareth, one imbued with' a living message and blessed with such curative power, should be so wrongfully treated and put to death: There is more however in the story of the Savior's ministry than merely a wasted life and needless death very much more.

*"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone"* were the words of the Master, sublimely, expressing one of the principles of creation. Thus, the loss of Jesus' life will bring resurrection to all mankind, including peace and health -- and most of all, the promise of reconciliation to God, without which, everlasting life would be impossible to man. Harmony with the Creator is an essential part of the happiness of humanity, and it is this work which is assigned to the Christ, Jesus and his Church, for the Age of Restitution. It is their' blessed task to restore that condition which prevailed in Eden, of which it was written, "So God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27); but before such a reflection can shine from human society, Jesus and those willing to share his training must be fitted for such a work. Jesus was perfect when he came to earth, and forever remained so, but it was needful that he should first undergo tests of character on earth. These trials were necessary to prove his love -- that tender compassionate desire to lift a fallen race out of its misery to a plane of human perfection.

Within the scope of God's redemptive purpose there lay even -further beauties, for he planned that those who gave sufficient evidence of their love for himself should be given the means whereby their characters would be changed into the likeness of their Lord. What a depth of goodness is here revealed in the mighty Creator, that he should desire to have a family, called from among the sons of men, and that these brethren of Jesus should be associated in the work: of restoration. And yet, divine wisdom is again manifest, for who better could understand the weakness and hopelessness of sinful man than the beloved Redeemer and those who have shared his thorny pathway, while yet in the flesh? Who could more closely sympathize than those who have experienced the barrier between themselves and their Maker?

Sometimes the way with Jesus is difficult and sorrows seem multiplied on every side. It is just at those times when we should lay aside our work awhile, leave the rush and bustle of the day's pressing duties, and enter into communion with him who trod this way before us. The great tomes of theological learning will give us no comfort in such circumstances, as will the simple Gospel story of one who endured unto death, amid the most heart-breaking experiences. Well did the writer to the Hebrews express himself: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the, joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2.) By meditating upon the reactions which he had to sin, we shall see more clearly our own course at every stage along the pilgrim journey.

Can we recall the picture of the tired Master as he provided bread for a hungry audience after discoursing to them all day; or see him as he tenderly spoke to the Samaritan woman concerning the Word of Life. The centurion's servant was made whole by the Prince of Peace; the widow's son was raised from the dead by him who was "Heir of all things." Was he ever too weary or too bitter to minister to even one poor soul? Were any too foreign or too humble or too young for his healing touch? Did he ever lose his temper with that stiff-necked generation of scoffers? No,

indeed, his life was a sublime example of the wonderful precepts which he had enunciated on the mountain side in the early part of his ministry. (Matt. 5:1-12.) His words and actions never became hasty even under the intense persecution of his latter days upon the earth; in fact the nearer he came to death, the greater manifest was his love for his brethren and for the world.

But what is all this to us and what does it mean to our hearts and lives? If the Word of the Lord is deeply rooted in our minds and if the "first love" for our beloved Lord has been retained through the trial and stress of life's experiences, then slowly but surely the impression of his likeness is being made upon our characters. Beyond all intellectual knowledge, above the gifts of speech or pen, beside every Christian activity, must come this process of sanctification and development within the heart, of a fruitage of love which shall bring life to the nations and joy to all mankind. It is the inward reaction to the buffeting and straining in life's battles that makes or mars the Christian character. Troubles arise within the very Church, to which the godly soul must respond submissively to the Father's will and with affection for our brethren. Intellects differ widely and, cause the development of opposing viewpoints about certain doctrines; personalities having been formed within contrasting environments, clash easily and cause friction among God's people. What is the result upon the Church? Do such experiences draw us closer together by the very fact that we have to learn to be patient and care for each other's limitations and weaknesses, or does the reverse happen? Do the differences of opinion produce the fruit of the spirit within us, drawing us nearer to our God and to each other? What opportunities are ours to practice the qualities needed to attain the standard of association with the great High Priest! The privilege of thus serving each other now is that we might be fitted for the work in the future of serving together. But patience is not developed in a community where everything runs smoothly, where all think the same way upon all points of Christian teaching. Nor is love engendered when those who irritate each other part company, for that abolishes many opportunities to express the joy of "in honor preferring one another."

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples was the identification which Jesus gave to his followers, "if ye have love one for another." Looking into the future of his Church he saw this distinguishing feature from the world, and recognized that while it toiled amid a scornful world, their unity, their constraining love would shine forth as a wonderful witness. Has this been the experience of his Bride through the ages? Does this illustrate the path of the Narrow Way through the Gospel Era? We leave each one to answer that question, now, but it is sufficient that in looking back over the centuries we take note of the failings of others and endeavor not to stumble as they have done. The world is quick to criticize the weaknesses in Christian communities, especially when internal strife is evident; therefore it is of no avail displaying leaflets and tracts, and becoming noisy about "world events" unless there is a living witness within our fellowship, shining, clearly and purely.

Thus shall we be prepared to go forth into the world, here and now as ministering such blessings and assistance as lie within our scope. If we have humbly wrought good works among our brethren, we shall be in a better condition to help our fellow man in the, daily routine. It is easy to talk about brotherly love and shut half of God's children outside our walls in cold isolation. It is even easier to explain how we shall "bless all the families of the earth, and, then fail to bless the few of those families which we contact every day now. It may not be our privilege to labor among men in any, healing or social capacity, but every child of God has the opportunity during some part of his life to, manifest those qualities which will enable him to share the Kingdom work. As we jostle in the bus queue or shopping market, we are in one of the environments which God has placed us to show forth his glory. God is training men and women now to be tender, kind-hearted, and patient with the human race. The qualities of mercy and wisdom will surely be required of those who have lived amid iniquity and unrighteousness for decades, as they restore to



life and re-educate earth's millions. Who better will be trained for such a work than those who have manifested God's love while they have been under the burden of human imperfection and subjected to persecution? Do we rejoice in affliction and revile not again when troubled on every side? Do our workmates, our colleagues, those with whom we have to do, day by day, see the gentle, compassionate side of our nature or the impassioned, ill-tempered, brutal aspect, which if, allowed to spring up can easily spoil God's workmanship.

*"Henceforth know we no man after the flesh,"* wrote the great Apostle Paul to the Romans. "No man" includes the fellow passengers in the train in which we travel, the man behind the store counter or the brother and sister in the home; most of all, our brother and sister in Christ. The way we act and speak is that which is covered by "after the flesh"; for after we have given our all to God, we look through new eyes of love and behold *everything* from the standpoint of a New Creature. *Everything* now is seen as Jesus would see it, and as a priest of God would see it. Any other attitude toward our associates in life's experience will lead us away from our calling to join with Jesus in' restoring the sin stricken creation... Maybe we shall find more than ever before that it is only rare scholars who can- graduate in the school of Christ, but let us remember too, that God has brought us thus far, not to leave us now. Nor does it require great intellects to qualify for this Royal Priesthood. The patient, self sacrificing soul will be of more use to suffering humanity when clothed with an immortal nature than were such a prize given only to theological scholars.

Suffering with Christ will deepen our union with our Lord and Head (Phil. 4:10), and it will also give a firmer basis of fellowship with our brethren. Sharing his cross will also bring the happy experience of sovereignty with him, and what joys will be ours then, we can only meditate upon now. What was lost in Adam will be regained in that glad day, and we shall have the privilege of spreading leaves of healing among the nations and teaching them the way of peace, health, and life-everlasting. What little we suffer now will be more than outweighed by one glance at our beloved Lord's face, but we shall more than see him. If we co-labor with him now, if we commune with him, share his sorrows and joys *now*, we shall share his life, when we are beyond this vale of tears. *May* these few thoughts *spur us on until we reach our Heavenly home, until we see our Father and our Jesus face to face.*

- *Bible Students Monthly, Eng.*

## When I Consider Him

When I think of how He suffered,  
Of the pain and grief He bore,  
Of the fury born of malice  
That upon His head did pour;  
Then that which so sorely grieved me,  
In significance doth fade,  
Till I wonder that I ever  
So much stress on it had laid.

For the roughest road I travel,  
And the sharpest pang I bear,  
Can not even for one moment  
With His sufferings compare.  
On His tender heart the burden  
Of a sin-cursed world then lay;  
Which He bore without a murmur,  
As His life-blood ebbed away.

All alone He trod the winepress,  
Mocked and scourged by hand and rod;  
He shrank not from shame and spitting  
That I might draw near to God.  
Then shall I cry out in terror,  
When the storm winds o'er me sweep?  
And because of light affliction  
Fail my covenant to keep?

Blessed Jesus! Lord and Master!  
When in memory I see,  
All the bitter pain and sorrow  
Thou hast borne to set me free,  
I am mute before the vision  
Ending with a blood-stained cross,  
And with streaming eyes I whisper,  
Lord, beside Thee, all is dross.

If my heart will but topsider  
What the Savior meekly bore,  
It will cease its sad repining  
And will trust Him evermore.  
And with hope and faith undaunted  
Run with patience in the race,  
Till hope ends in full fruition  
And I see Him face to face.

- *Margaret H. Black*

## Unity Versus Confederacy

*"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell, together in unity." - Psa. 133:1.*

GOD our Father has formed a Priesthood, of which the Lord Jesus is the Head, and it is a family loved of Christ, washed from their sins by him in his own blood, anointed with the holy spirit and separated from the world unto God a priesthood of his own selection.

A priestly standing is one of constant subjection to the revealed will of God and an abiding consciousness of his presence. In this elevated and exalted position we walk in the liberty of Christ, holding him as our Head, subject to him in all things, and "not servants of man." Being made free from sin we are servants of righteousness, servants of God. (Rom. 6:18, 22.) Our blessed occupation during this night of the world's darkness is to stand in the House of the Lord, to praise his Name and "worship him in spirit and in truth." But no true worship can be rendered to God if the soul is in bondage.

As believers we have received an unction from the Holy One, Christ Jesus, our anointed Head. Moreover, we have an infallible interpreter ever present with us, and dwelling in us, the spirit of truth, the holy spirit, so that we are-without excuse if we abide by human wisdom instead of cleaving to the Word of God, or if we willingly remain in ignorance of what that Word declares.

May the Lord preserve us from walking in the false light of our carnal wisdom. Ought we not to consider his Word sufficient for our instruction and guidance in all matters of the Gospel truth, worship, and service? It is well for us to confine ourselves within the limits of his Holy Word, to hold all the truths it contains, adding nothing to them and omitting none of them.

What is to be the course of the true-hearted worshiper? The answer has been supplied by the Apostle in his letter to Titus, outlining the work of the ministry, "In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works," thereby manifesting that it is a doctrine (teaching) of love, joy, and peace in the holy spirit, and that by consistent holy living we may "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." - Titus 2:11-14.

God's Word is sufficiently full and sufficiently accurate, enabling us to discern between truth and error; and the fashioning of creeds as the vehicles of truth is not holding God's Word to be sufficient unto every good work. God has laid down his own definitions, measurements, and dimensions of the truth, and it is our place to bow reverently and to believe what he has recorded touching the work of the Lord Jesus and the eternal salvation and inheritance which are obtained for us by his own blood.

After having the evidence that we are prospective members of Christ's Body, there is great danger of stretching out the hand to defend or maintain these arrangements by the exercise of human wisdom, even the appeal to human writings and human standards which, however true, can never embrace the fulness of God's Word. "Many, O Lord, my God, are thy wonderful work." When we seek to count up his mercies towards us, they are passing knowledge; they are beyond all calculation, and it will take us **an** eternity of unbroken rest and blessedness to discover them.

We have no external, beacon to direct us, but we have that which is far better, the indwelling of the holy spirit, and this same spirit teaches us to abide in him, for without him we can do nothing. Thus, he would have us seek to know his mind and will in all things, that is, in every fresh change that we propose. In this respect, the Word must first be consulted that we may ascertain whether the counsel of our hearts is in any way opposed to the smallest injunctions of Christ. If so, it is plain that we have not the full guidance of God for our undertaking.

God through Christ Jesus is the Guardian of his truth and if we really have received the unction from the Holy One, there would be no divided Church; all would dwell together in unity, not merely to meet and fellowship together, but to abide in One-and that "with all saints. "But wherever separation comes in and divides believers from one another, the bond of brotherhood is made to yield to some other bond; the tie of life and union with Christ, witnessed by the holy spirit's presence and power, is sacrificed to some fleshly association." The bond that links God's people together is the love of Christ. He has bound us up with himself, in one bundle of life, no longer aliens or strangers but children and heirs, and he is not ashamed to call us brethren. He being raised' from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God shed forth that blessed spirit, giving gifts which should fit his Body members for, their various places in the Body, knitting them together in the unity of the spirit, that they might grow into him in all things, "which is the Head, even Christ."

The spirit's unity is described in the seven unities which follow: One Body, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Eph. 4:2-6.) These are all God-given, and if we do not endeavor to hold these truths in which every believer is supposed from the first to have been grounded and settled, we will surely become entangled again in that yoke of bondage from which God through Christ has set us free.

"A religion of form and ceremony, which is in truth a religion mixed with idolatry, will always consist well with worldliness." St. Paul saw the germs of a sectarian spirit working in the early Church and he spoke to them as carnal, saying, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified, for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" - 1 Cor. 1:12, 13.

Again, there is danger that the "I am of Christ" may be used in a sectarian way. It may be adopted in the way" of a proud and boastful assertion to imply that others are not "of him" because they are not taking the same course or viewing certain subjects of truth exactly in the same way. This tendency was also displayed in the early Church. Even John rebuked one who was clearly on the Lord's side "because he followeth not with us." (Luke 9:49.) The Master's reply to John should make us stop and think.

So, then, anything on our part which hinders the edifying of the one Body as a whole is a breach of the unity of the spirit. With such the holy spirit is grieved and the Word of God becomes of none effect; and love, that bond of perfectness, is chilled in the heart. We have a solemn warning in the following words of the Prophet Isaiah, "Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of mine hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow." - Isa. 50:11.

May the God of all grace keep his people from compassing themselves about with sparks of human reason and expediency, for "they that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; That they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a 'god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows shall be ashamed; and the workmen, they are of men: let them

all be gathered together, let them stand up; yet they shall fear, and they shall be ashamed." (Isa. 44:9-11.) The Prophet Isaiah thus clearly reveals that creature worship in any form is disapproved of God. "See thou do it not; worship God." (Rev. 22:8, 9.) "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love," let us "endeavor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

"How blest the children of the Lord,  
Who, walking in His sight,  
Make all the precepts of, His Word  
Their study and delight!

"That precious wealth shall be their dower,  
Which cannot know decay:  
Which moth and rust shall ne'er devour,  
Or spoiler take away."

- *T. G. Smith*

## "The Way, the Truth, the Life"

Christ said, "I am the true and living way."  
And mortal man, from Paradise debarred,  
(Where once was open intercourse with God),  
When strongly stirred by yearnings deep within  
To throw off tyranny of deep-rooted sin  
And win his way back to his lost estate,  
Finds Cherubim still posted at the gate  
Upholding God's just claims of righteousness --  
Demanding purity, not taking less.  
Turned back, beat down, undone, in measure short,  
Still yearning to true righteousness comport,  
Learns God, Himself, has filled his every need.  
So loved the world He gave His Son to bleed  
In sacrifice that man might now make bold  
Into the holiest of all. For Jesus told  
"I am the Way."

"I am the Truth"; and most exact is truth.  
And man, bewildered by conflicting claims  
Of various schools of thought which but defame  
The God of Truth -- with this bewildered mind  
Turns to God's Word, if haply he may find"  
"Thy Word is truth," as Jesus said of it.  
Finds to know truth, himself he must submit  
To being freed from all false estimate  
Of wealth, of world; and self must dedicate  
To do the will of Him, whose doctrines may  
Be known to only those who will obey.  
For, searching truth in deep sincerity,  
He finds it more than mere philosophy.  
A revelation comes by which he's led  
To take up cross and follow Him who said,  
"I am the Truth."

"I am the Life." And what a boon is life!  
Yet man, subject to vanity, can know  
But death; corroding sin has made him rue  
The day of birth so oft as he is brought  
To grief by sin's mad tyranny. Though fought  
Against with tears and agonizing cry,  
In faintness hears the stern "Who sins must die!"  
What hope is there? Must death forever be  
The wage of sin through all eternity?  
Yes. But praise God! eternity is ours,  
Who, laying hold in faith on promised powers,  
Receive from the ascended Lord the gift  
Of spirit new-a power that can rift  
The gates of death, and quicken us to be  
Alive in Him, who showed at Bethany  
"That He is Life.

Christ said, "I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.  
And we, no longer barred from Eden's bowers,  
In Him have heritage so high it towers  
E'en higher yet than mind can now conceive.  
What wonder, then, but that small flock receives  
An entrance into Kingdom so divine.  
Self dead, and seeking daily to define  
Our faith in outward conduct, we become,  
By grace, joint-heirs with Him who is the sum  
Of all God's fulness -- kings and priests to be  
Unto our God for all humanity.  
Redeemed from every tongue and every race,  
Though raised so high by wondrous sovereign grace,  
We'll join with all creation to acclaim  
All honor to the One 'who once became  
"The Way, the Truth, the Life."

- Frederick A. Essler

## "The Hidden Life"

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things, which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. - Col. 3:1-4.*

HOW like the distant view of some mighty mountain range stands the Epistle to the Colossians before our wondering eyes! Here, in this place some outstanding, weighty statement thrusts its way up into the clear blue heights of unsophisticated revelation, disclosing facts and truths no human speculation could ever hope to attain; there, in another place, the terrain of the discourse sinks steeply to the foothills of human life and earthly experience to the common levels of human contacts of which the warp and woof of life is made! Up and down, ascent and descent--so runs the contour of Paul's argument. And yet the whole outline is of one piece. The steep ascents into heavenly things -- marvelous and entrancing though they truly are -- stand related (as cause to consequence) to experiences known and shared by God's people here on earth, and link the citizens of this terrestrial plane to Powers and Persons enthroned above amid celestial things.

These first few phrases of chapter 3, constitute one such outstanding peak in this celestio-terrestrial mountain range. How amazing is the language here! Enthroned at God's right hand sits the worthy Son, the everlasting token of the divine victory over death; raised thereto by an Almighty Hand, and partaking of the pure delight of being "alive forevermore." His is triumph and exaltation rightly won by faithfulness even unto death.

But who are these to whom Paul speaks when he says, "If, ye then be risen with Christ"? What kind of language is this? How can men still domiciled on earth be counted as risen with Christ? "Ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God," he then proceeds to say -- "hid with Christ in God," a hidden life, a life withholden from the sight and ken of men; a life deposited and enfolded in a hidden God; a hidden Christ as the connecting tie between. Where is the pattern for such words and thoughts as these? Are they just speculation or fantasy, or imagination run astray? Are these the vain conjectures of vivid mind, breaking through into realms where dreams are made?

We have no need to ask this of our Brother Paul, for his outstanding assertion was based on well established fact. He had seen "*Him*" with his own eyes, and had heard His arresting Voice! Jesus Christ had indeed been raised from the dead--that he knew beyond all questioning--and had come forth to accost him on the Damascus way in a panoply of glory brighter than the midday sun. And he had linked his suffering saints here on this sad earth with his own exalted Personage, merging his own identity and theirs into one indivisible whole -- a unity, that caught them up into himself and made their pains and sufferings his very own. "Why persecutest thou me"? asked the Risen One. How could that be? How could an earthly persecutor harass or molest the occupant of a heavenly throne? Yet there could be no mistaking what he had said. "Why persecutest thou me"? -- could Paul easily or ever forget those searching words? Nay, verily. But what a search light into heavenly relationships did they afford! Always, everywhere, by ardent voice and fervent pen. Paul made that union of suffering men with risen Christ the theme song of his ministry! Yet who on earth, save suffering saints had understanding, or showed awareness of that mysterious unity? By one mode of life the saint lived here on earth as earthly man among earthly men; by yet another mode of life he lived among celestial things in Christ, with Christ, for Christ--a life apart, above, removed and separated from earthly things. In very deed and truth "a hidden life," so far as



men on earth had knowledge or concern, but an open life, known and beloved, in Heaven's appreciating sight.

But this is not the only hidden thing of which Paul speaks in this letter to his Colossian friends. In Col. 2:3-6 he speaks of treasures of wisdom and knowledge, hidden in Christ; riches of assured understanding in the knowledge of God's great mysteries. And he begs his Colossian brethren to become rooted and "built up in Him" and established in the faith as they had been taught, on the foundations truly laid by himself in accordance with those hidden things.

Then, by contrast, yet without specifically mentioning them as hidden things, he proceeds to warn them of some seducers who would make a *prey* of them "by philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of this world." - Col. 2:8.

In Paul's day, as in our own, men claimed conceitedly, "by speculative research, that they could "find out God." Then, as now, there was a riddle of the universe, concerning which curious minds were ever spinning vain philosophies. Starting from the known phenomena of life, as it involved and surrounded them, they sought to trace the sequence of things back to its First Causes. "Whence came this world?" and "whence came man upon it?" "Whence came, the evil and the good, the laughter and the tears?" "What was the relationship between the known and 'The Unknown,' between produced effect and producing cause?" Such were the problems raised, many the answers given.

Here are things which curious minds have probed and scanned repeatedly since God gave man over to a reprobate mind long ages ago, and which they must still continue to probe and scan in vain until God removes his imposed decree of vanity from their darkened minds. - Rom. 8:19-21.

However, there were not wanting men in Paul's own day -- a worldly wise, select minority, which claimed to have solved the great enigma, which boasted with much acclaim that they "knew the answer to the great mystery. Within the ranks of their secret brotherhoods they claimed to hold the key to the great universal problem -- a key reserved and kept exclusively for themselves and their immediate initiates. Only such as had received initiation by secret rite and binding oath could be accepted and entrusted as custodians of the mysteries. Only such as could boast the diploma of the "gnostic" school could claim to "burst through into the silent sea" of the higher understanding, and blazon forth his claim to knowledge of the hidden things that lay beyond the range of the common ken.

These men appear on the pages of early Christian history as "The Gnostics"; their system of vain speculation and philosophy was defined by them as "The Gnosis" -- a term frequently found under Paul's own pen. Their claim to have knowledge of the hidden wisdom set them in a class apart. For ordinary and untaught men the common ranges of philosophy might suffice; for themselves nothing less than the inner (esoteric) doctrine could suffice. Along with this inner understanding often went a knowledge of the occult sciences, of magic and of magnetism; of talismans and incantations, by means of which the common man was kept, submissively in awe and trepidation, while the assertive, proud initiate became invested with an aura of sanctity by reason of his professed communion with the gods.

But the full grown stage of Gnosticism had not yet arrived in Paul's own day. It was the unhappy experience of the Apostle John in later years to meet it in its fuller development, though even then it had riot attained its fullest bloom, a stage which came only with the middle years of the second century.

But in his own day Paul knew the deadly nature of the heresy which was settling in upon the Colossian Church, and hesitated not to warn of its blighting, captivating nature. It was a system of vain philosophy and empty deceit, pertaining to the elemental spirits of the universe. (Ver. 8.) It made man take his stand on visions and imaginations, puffing out his mind with sensuous things. (Ver. 18.) As such it was a menace to inquisitive minds unblest by a stable faith. It had blended with itself traces of Judaism, such as the observance of days and months, and a certain veneration for an angelic ministry, and as such became more subtle to the but newly enlightened Christian mind in Colosse.

Perhaps at this point, the comment of Bishop Ellicott may be introduced acceptably: ". . . in Judaism," he says, "there was much to attract the Gnostic. In it he found the one great living system of Monotheism, setting forth the Absolute and Infinite God as the Eternal Source of Being; invisible and incomprehensible to man; so infinitely above all creatures that his very Name was too sacred to be pronounced by human lips. In it he also found, or could easily develop the doctrine of angelic intervention in the creation and guidance of nature in the intercourse of God with man; even in the government of human history, and the protection both of individuals and of races. The peculiar privilege of a chosen' people, easily represented as belonging to them simply through a higher knowledge, and not less easily transferred as an inheritance to a spiritual Israel of the 'enlightened' and the 'perfect,' supplied the element of exclusiveness inherent in all Gnostic systems; and the ordinances of ritual, of typical sacrifices and ceremonial purity, readily lent themselves to the conception of a certain mystic consecration of the privileged, 'who might be a royal priesthood, a prophetic and saintly order, before God, as distinct from 'the people, who knew not the mystic law' and were therefore 'accursed.' Nor would he fail to notice in the 'Wisdom' books of the Old Testament -- such as Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes -- the exaltation of wisdom as distinct from faith and holiness to a supreme place; and he would find that round the memory of the Wise Man had grown up a whole crowd of legends of mystic lore, of supernatural insight, and of an equally supernatural power over the world of angels and of demons."

Thus in his contact with Judaism, the Grecian philosopher had found much that would give a kind of substance and solidity to his vague and artificial speculation.

It is an amazing thought that the Grecian Philosopher had gone back to the self same system in Israel for the proofs of his special claims to which Paul and Peter and John so often went for, their thoughts and words and, phrases whereby to express the Christian's special privileges and prerogatives. But with this difference: they went with an unilluminated, speculative state of mind; our Apostolic teachers went under the guidance of the, spirit of the Lord. They went not knowing that the types and rituals were superficial and temporary; our teachers knew these things had had, their day, and were now no more than types and shadows of much "better things." While in very truth, the system of Israel had had its hidden things, it could now be seen as it was always intended' by God to be a shadowy out line of hidden things on a, higher plane.

Thus from the same Israelitish source, both Apostles and philosophers sought to persuade Colossian brethren that they had treasures of hidden knowledge to impart, the one spiritual and elevating, and centering in the Person of the Lord; the other sensual and debasing, and centering in the persons of elemental spirits, rising rank on rank till the wide gulf betwixt God and man was spanned.

It was Paul's insistent claim that Jesus Christ alone was the bridge that spanned the gulf; that he with his Church, was the bond that linked God with man, and man with God, for "by Him all things were created that are in heaven, *and* that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be

thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created for him and by him. And he is before all things; and by him all things consist; and he is the Head of the Body, the Church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness [pleroma] dwell." There is no uncertainty in the challenge to the speculating philosophers' claims. Not angels, not eons, not demiurges, rank on rank, fill up the chasm between the finite and the Infinite, but only Christ Jesus the Lord, by whom, as Logos, the world was made, and for whom, as King, the world still waits. To him was accorded the "Fulness" -- that which filled up the void 'twixt God and man.

But knowledge such as this must be "of faith." Only by revelation from "the other side" can it be known and understood. It is not capable of being reasoned out or speculated upon. It is part of God's "hidden things" -- to man unknown except and until He shall give the understanding. It appertains to that wisdom "taught by the spirit, which interprets spiritual truths to those who possess the spirit." Unspiritual mere do not receive these things -- they are folly unto them; they are not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. - 1 Cor. 2:13, 14.

It may seem an ironic thing in Bible reading lands, to say that there are still "hidden things" in the Holy Book, hidden still from eyes that scan its lines with a too precise rationality. When the Holy Book is leveled down to the plane of mere literature it will have nothing to say to its scrutineer. Dissected and analyzed under higher critical research, it falls to pieces in their hands, and wrecks the faith that wields the surgeon's knife. It has no present word for such. Even to immature and imperfect faith it will not yield up its mysteries. The "hidden knowledge" is provision only for the "hidden life" -- a life wherein faith attains full growth, and learns to live among hidden things with hidden Personalities, enjoying hidden and exclusive opportunities, which lead onward to a still hidden destiny. Where and what are all these hidden things?

The patterns of these things, were given to Israel, from whence Paul- and John and Peter gathered evidence. Within that Divinely guarded Tabernacle dwelt the token of a hidden God ever present in the midst, but continually unseen, except to chosen eyes, at appointed times and under specific circumstances.

To gain access to that hidden shrine, a hidden Priest must move along a hidden path; a path illumined by a hidden light, a Priest sustained and nourished by a Hidden Bread; a Priest engaged upon a hidden ritual. No unanointed eye ever gazed upon these hidden, things.

"What lone mysterious abode is this,  
Surrounded by a wall of spotless white,  
By day an altar in the wilderness,  
A silent watcher on the plain by night?"

"Who dwells within its consecrated wail,  
To secular and alien feet denied?  
Who answers when the priest, white-robed and pale  
Sprinkles the blood by 'bulls and goats' supplied?"

Here verily were patterns of the Christian's "hidden life"! Here surely the outlines of many "hidden" truths! Here obviously the "fulness" -- the bridge that linked the God within, to the needy souls without! Here undoubtedly the semblance to that "better" anointing which betokened the living Christ!

Truly here indeed are hidden Personalities, hidden principles, hidden, privileges, hidden duties, hidden services; a truly "Hidden Life, hidden by its very anointing, in the presence of its God! How more effectively than this could' type and shadow depict before our minds the re-assuring truth that the faithful Christian's "life is hid with Christ in God"?

This hidden life in Christ, with certain of its principles, privileges, requirements and expectations is the theme to which our minds will turn from time to time, in coming days. And always as we seek to portray that deeper Christian life, we shall go back like Paul, and like the heathen. speculator too, to the pattern that was given to Moses "in the holy mount" there to find a key to help us find access into the secret treasure-house of God.

- T. Holmes, Eng.

## Interesting Selections

*Order my steps in Thy word.* - Psalm 119:113.

I am no longer anxious about anything; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions God must give me His grace and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient.

If God place me in great perplexity, must He not give me *much guidance*; in positions of great difficulty, *much grace*; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, *much strength*? No fear that his resources will be unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for He is mine. "Things present, or things to come; all are yours."

-- Dr. J. Hudson Taylor.

## Christ our Biographer

We need not trouble to keep diaries of our good deeds or sacrifices, or to write autobiographies with pages of record for the things we have done. We may safely let our life write its own record, or let Christ be our biographer. He will never forget anything we do, and the judgment day will reveal everything. The lowliest services and the obscurest deeds will then be manifested.

## The Question Box

### *Question:*

In John 13:34 we read: "A new commandment. I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." In what sense was this commandment new?

### *Answer:*

It was not new in the sense that a command to love had never before been given. Such a commandment "was written in the very constitution of Adam and Eve." (See *Scripture Studies*, Vol. VI, page F350.) Moreover, love to one's neighbor is enjoined in the Old Testament. (Lev. 19:18.) But the law of love which Jesus here gave was new in two senses: (1) It was to be a love *for one another*, and, (2) they were to love one another *as Jesus had loved them*. Let us briefly consider his commandment from these two points of view.

#### *1. They were to love one another.*

The love here enjoined was not a love which was to apply to the entire human race (as in the case of the law of love written in the constitution of the first man), nor was it to be especially applicable to the members of the nation of Israel, as might be said of the law of love stated in Leviticus. It was given (not to all men, nor yet to Israel, but) to the footstep followers of the Master. It was to embrace them all, but only them. Moreover the earlier laws of love were not thereby repealed, even for them. This constitutes an additional obligation.

This commandment, therefore, was new in that it was to commence from a new center, even from Jesus himself; and was to embrace an entirely new circle -the Church. It would thus be suited to new circumstances. The Church which is his Body was about to be founded, and love was to be the mighty influence animating its members, the powerful bond uniting the members of that Body to each other and to Jesus, their Head. His Body-members, united to each other in love, were to be his love bearers to the world. To the world the constant love which would be seen in the relationship of the members of the Church to each other would be taken as a proof of their discipleship. "By *this* shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love *one to another*." - *Verse 35*.

#### *2. They were to love one another "as I [Jesus], have loved, you."*

Scholars tell us that the Greek word here translated "as" means more than a simple comparison; it indicates a conformity, and characterizes the mutual love of Christians as *being of the same nature as that which unites Jesus to his footstep followers*, each returning to his brother the love with which Jesus loves him.

When our Lord gave them this new commandment he was within a few hours of his death. His love for them, which had always been strong and unremitting, had never been greater. "Having loved his own which, were in the world, he loved them *unto the end*." (Verse 1.) If, therefore, their love was to be in conformity with his, it would mean a willingness on their part to suffer for their brethren similarly, even unto death, and this conclusion is actually drawn by St. John in his

first epistle. There, in chapter 3, verse 16, he says: 'Because he laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren..''

There is an instructive paragraph on this question from the pen of Brother Russell in *Reprints*, page R4549. We quote: "The 'New Commandment' represents a higher law than was given to the Jew under the Law Covenant,; hence higher also than will be given to Israel and mankind under the New Covenant. The New Commandment mentioned by our Lord is not the Father's commandment at all, but the command of our Head, our Teacher, to all those who have entered the school of Christ and who are hoping to become 'members' of the Anointed One -- members of the Mediator, Prophet, Priest, and King of the new dispensation. Justice could not give this, new command; all that justice could command is expressed in the law given to Israel, namely, supreme love of God and love for the neighbor as for one's self. This new commandment which the Lord gave applies only to the Church of this Gospel Age. In effect it is this: If you would be my disciples, if you would share my throne and glory and immortality, you must have my spirit. You must do more than keep the Law. You must be more than just. You must be self sacrificing. If you would share my glory, I command and direct that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12.) I have loved you to the extent of laying down my life for you sacrificially. You must have this same spirit and cast in your lot with me in self sacrifice, or you cannot be my disciples, nor share my glory, and associate in my work as the Mediator for the blessing of Israel and mankind. Whosoever will be ray disciple must take up his cross; and follow me, that where I am there shall my disciple be. Surely no one can doubt the Savior's meaning-my disciples must die with me."

Our Lord's new commandment was most loyally obeyed. And the flame of this entirely new affection on earth, streaming forth from the holy fires burning: in the early Church, proved a most mighty influence in the spread of the Gospel. And we, too, are determined, are we not, that our fellowship shall be similarly attested; that men shall be constrained to say of us, as of them: "See how these Christians love one another!"

- P. L. Read.

## Encouraging Messages

My Dear Brethren:

The close of the year is a season for reflection. We look back and review God's mercies. How many and opportune! Under what obligations they place us. How they quicken gratitude! We also take into account our failures. They have been many, impressing us with a sense of our unworthiness.

The year has-doubtless had its varied experiences for *us* all, but blessings have super-abounded. *The real gauge of "our existence" is spiritual attainment -- maturity.* What then have we gained this last twelve months? *As* New Creatures in Christ Jesus-in what direction, and how *much* have we grown in "the fruits *and* graces of the Holy Spirit? Little time remains in which to perfect our characters.

Beware! Oh beware, then, of ever resisting the Lord's will -- even in the least thing. The more intensely we realize unseen and eternal things,- the more we can afford to dispense with the things of time *and* sense. The unspeakable importance of Eternity throws *into* the shade our earthly circumstances. Our eternity *is* suspended upon *the* way in which we pass through a very short span of time, and this very brief period of time takes its complexion from the moments which go to make it up. Our experiences *now* are fitting us to judge the world later.

*We are nearing "Home."*

Only a whole hearted love for the Lord and a well grounded faith in the "exceeding great and precious promises" will carry *us* through *to* the end of the journey.

Sad indeed it would be, if after long association with the "*truth*" we should be ' in danger of making shipwreck within sight of the "Heavenly Port." - Rev. 3:21.

Warm greetings from an old pilgrim.

*A. H. -- Eng.*

Dear Brethren Abroad:

Christian love and greetings from Germany with Psalm 23,

From our meeting here on this day we send *you*, dear brethren abroad, hearty greetings of Christian love and unity.

We wish for you blessed Christmas *days* and a Happy New Year 1950. We close the old year with-praise and-thanks for the Heavenly Father and our dear Redeemer. We are rejoicing at the hearty communion with *all* the saints on *the* whole earth.

Let us enter in the new *year* with new hope and great confidence. Prospective, it *will* be a *decisive* and important year for God's people. Therefore, we gladly look up and lift up our heads, because our redemption draweth nigh, and also that of the whole groaning creation.

Your brethren in Christ,

Signed by 23 names -- Germany.

Dear Brethren

I have just finished reading the *two volumes* of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" by Brother Streeter,' and it makes *me'* realize more than ever what leaky vessels we are at least I am very leaky-and I would urge all to read and reread these two books. I do not know how long I have had them-evidently read them years ago, and much of same was *in* the back of my head'-but surely needed an awakening. The thoughts presented appealed to me more than anything I have read *on* -the Book *of* Revelation for a long time. I laid aside all reading matter and failed to keep up with my correspondence, wanting to finish both books, and I' do hope many of the friends will secure the benefit of rereading them. . . .

Please send me 500 "Do You Know? tracts. I have to watch my activities since *my* illness in 1948, but the Lord permits me many privileges for which I am very thankful.

Christian love,

J. W. -- Texas.

## Recently Deceased

Mrs. Martha Arnold, Reading, Pa. - (December).  
Mrs. Edith P. Dodd, St. Petersburg, Fla. - (December).  
Mr. J. W. Ethridge, Bowie, Texas - (December).  
Mr. H. H. Herron, St. Petersburg, Fla. - (August).  
Mr. Wm. A. Morris, Monroe, Ark. - (October).  
Mrs. Mariette Ragoh, Santa Cruz, Calif. - (December).  
Mr. B. Thatcher, Leicester, Eng. - (October).  
Mrs. Stella -Wisniewski, Brooklyn, N. Y. - (December).