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Treasured Memories

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." - Psalm 103:2.

IF IT be correct to believe that when our life on earth has ended, "Looking back we'll praise the way" the loving hand of God led us all the way, can we not believe that such retrospection will be very intimately associated with those special and outstanding experiences when through individuals, or by incidents in special places, or perhaps by some marked angel-ministrations, we seemed brought near to God. Will it not be with us as it came to pass in Jacob's experience when he returned to Bethel-that place of hallowed memory where he had previously known such intimate contact with heaven. Could he ever forget Bethel, with its ladder reaching from earth to heaven, connecting both in the grand design God had planned for his after-life? Again and again in retrospective meditations he must have called to mind those angels ascending and descending that majestic stairway, and in such moments lived over again the blessed sense of God's presence granted to him there, and of which he had said, "Surely the Lord is in this place . . . this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." - Gen. 28:16, 17.

LIFE'S BETHEL JOYS

Such God-given impressions are most assuredly meant to abide forever as memorials of how truly "the steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." During his years of service in the employ of Laban, the years of such varied experiences, how often Jacob's thoughts must have turned back to Bethel, calling to mind that scene and the words spoken to him there. What renewed faith and fresh encouragement every recollection of that wonderful night would bring to him, deepening his appreciation of the birthright hopes he valued so highly. But when the years of service with Laban were ended, and the fulfilment of God's promise had placed him again in the homeland, with Esau pacified, can we not feel assured there would be a strong impulse drawing him again to that particular spot of sacred memory? Surely so. Indeed the record shows that he did return, and in doing so there must have come to him again something of the former joyous realization of God's presence. There he raised a pillar of stone as a perpetual memorial of God's loving-kindness. But there must have been more in his thought than that visible emblem of his gratitude. Who can doubt that within the inner shrine of his heart a still more enduring Ebenezer was raised, an unfading memorial to remain with him until he fell asleep in death. This will certainly not be absent from his memory when he is awakened to possess in full the inheritance that God's

promise still holds for him. When that day of awakening dawns for him, how can he fail to "look back" in fervent gratitude to Bethel, recalling the love that had continued with him through all his wanderings, or fail to remember the voice that had spoken to him on that memorable night.

Then, since we too have precious memories stored up where such treasures do not fade, and recollections preserved where nothing good is ever lost or forgotten, will it not be a part of our future joy to recall our Bethel places of vision, where God gave our faith and hope renewed vigor and assurance? How possible that there may be no little regret then that we had not followed God's leadings more faithfully, and more such Bethel places been our experience. But let us hope there will be for all of us many happy recollections to rejoice over "When we stand with Christ in glory, looking o'er life's finished story."

Is it conceivable that we should traverse the long, tedious, and often trying pathway of life on earth, meeting its inevitable fluctuating experiences, knowing much of the trial of faith through waiting long for the consummation of our cherished hopes, without knowing also some of the outstanding Bethel joys and ministrations along that tedious way? Is it not of such special dispensations of grace we sing, "Here I raise my Ebenezer, thither by Thy grace I've come": Is it not true, as a writer of recent time has said, "Now and again there is a dash of sweetness poured into life's cup-some special deliverance-some undeserved and unusual benediction . . . sent apparently for no other reason than to satisfy God's passion for giving."

Some have known that experience in one way, some in another. Perhaps it has come to some in an hour of peculiar loneliness when none but God seemed near in understanding love, and when He gave comfort through a vision connecting a present trial with heaven's future joys, leaving the heart resting in the quietness of His peace. Or perhaps it came to another on one of those occasions when, in fellowship with others who had truly met in His name, by a song, a prayer, or by a message that was Spirit-inspired, He granted a deeper sense of His preciousness, bringing to the lips the words of Jacob, "Surely the Lord is in this place . . . this is the gate of heaven." Or was it with some of us, as when the two with kindred hearts burning within them, walked in sweet communion with Jesus on the way to Emmaus? Have we never known times when doubts came in to becloud our assurance of His presence with us, times when all we had cherished of heavenly hope seemed vain and beyond our reach, only to have Jesus come to speak of Himself and thereby establish our confidence in His faithfulness.

Such occasions can come into any true Christian life. Should we not say they are a fundamental part of true Christian experience? If not, why do we feel the urge to sing of times, when, "Heaven comes down our souls to greet, while glory crowns the mercy-seat"? No idle words are these. Saints of all the Age can verify them as true words. Surely, then, each of us can recall such times or places, and fain would we turn our steps that way again if only to know once more the particular joy and inspiration by which that Ebenezer spot is fixed in heart and mind as a treasured memory.

Oh, can it be that after years of spiritual enlightenment and fellowship, no such sacred hours and paths are written deep on memory's tablets? Can it be there are no such paths over which we can walk again in thought with the Master, or with some kindred spirit, some understanding heart answering in vision with our own in devotion to Christ, and sharing with us the same fadeless hopes? Blessed communion this, when kindred minds catch the same vision of Christ's altogether loveliness, and encompass the same wideness and fulness of His grace. Is there one among us who can not look back to such sublime hours, and looking back say of a truth, "Jesus Himself drew near"?

TREASURES LAID UP IN HEAVEN

How far short of what might have been our happy experience if there are no such purifying and faith strengthening . recollections of God's wondrous leadings. Just to remember that Jesus Himself had need to be alone with God will emphasize our greater need for this aloneness with Him. Such times of nearness to Him benefit us in many ways. Among other benefits they bring to us, they may serve as a witness of the Spirit that though in the world, we are not of it. They come to us as proof of how fellowship in the Spirit can lift us above exacting toils and duties, somehow carrying us out and away from the din of human voices full of mundane interests, or harsh with the impatience of fret and care. It is all so real and practical. It is not taking us literally out of the world and away from all that God has designed shall serve to work out our good in the development of true character; nor are these occasions only possible in some retreat far removed from immediate seemingly hindering circumstances. The secret place is denied to none who desire to know its reality. True, for some chosen ones, as for Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, there may yet be some exclusive favors granted because of special responsibilities they are called upon to assume. But God can bring that experience into any life however environed it may be. No set of permitted circumstances need ever shut out those "sweet and glad surprises" God delights to give to His obedient children. He requires only that we be in line with all His will for us, and ready to say, "Where He leads me I will follow." Then, when He has thus been followed, has there ever been a true follower who has never heard the Savior say, "Come ye yourself apart and rest awhile"? He knows the need for such times apart, and He can be trusted to find a chosen place, some "gate of heaven" where a fragrance comes to cheer the heart and "steal the bitter from life's woes."

All the wealth of treasure we will find laid up in heaven will be forever associated with our life on earth, even here where we were privileged to be "called, chosen, and faithful." Is it, then, too earthbound a fancy to believe that all such precious memories will ever be bright in our mind in glory? It cannot be. If the ladder of Jacob linked earth and heaven for him, will they be less linked together for us? No indeed! Such Bethels can never be forgotten. The places where God came near, where angel-ministrations seemed to bring us close to the gates of glory, must ever remain as treasured memories. Only our sin will pass from memory when God has said, "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. That alone is all God will forget of our earthly life. All that was good and holy, all that produced a greater purity in us, all that had its origin in the heart and character of God and was sent by Him into our life here below, He remembers, and He will hold it all for us in His treasure vaults where no moth can destroy, or rust can ever tarnish their beauty. Some glad day they will all come back to us in added measure to be held by us in everlasting remembrance of His goodness.

Will Mary ever forget that room where Jesus gave an enduring fragrance to her spikenard, sending it down through the Age wherever the Gospel is preached? Will Peter forget that secret spot where in such sympathetic consideration Jesus met him alone after His resurrection? Will the two disciples ever forget the Emmaus-road sermon when hope and joy returned in floods of blessedness, or lose the unspeakable sweetness of that hour? Surely not! Will it not be the joy of all true saints of all this Age of grace to look back and recall some "gate of heaven" granted in time of need, making the Savior dearer and bringing heaven nearer?

"FORGET NOT ALL HIS BENEFITS"

That there will be rejoicing in heaven over all such happy recollections we may feel assured. But we ourselves are not there yet. Not yet may we stand with Christ in glory and survey all the way from earth to heaven. But even now it can and should mean much to us to think on mercies past,

surveying in gratitude the path already trod. All past blessings, more particularly whatever of special occasions God may have given us, are all intended to increase our joy in Him, and constrain us to have perpetuated the influence of such manifestations of His grace. True gratitude does not forget, but rather it serves to keep every benediction ever green in memory. Was not the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt to be told and retold from generation to generation? When that story was forgotten, Israel ceased to know the impulse of praise and gratitude. Never should God's past mercies be, forgotten. His special blessings are never given just to create a passing thrill of emotional joy. They are very particularly given to be inherently permanent in their effect on mind and heart. By the vision given to Jacob, God meant to give him an abiding assurance of a present care, thus furnishing him with a definite pledge of his future inheritance. He intends our experiences to mean as much to us. Therefore as every remembrance of Bethel occurring to Jacob must have strengthened and assured him, so should it be with us. Yes, increasingly so as we draw nearer Home. Calling to mind God's providences, remembering how "goodness and mercy" have followed us all the way, shall we not experience a definite purifying influence at work on our deeper self? All these were intended to make His favor more precious to us, and advance our characters in the righteousness of His own perfections. By these God would bring heaven more and more into our present life, keep us more intimately in fellowship with Jesus and Himself, and separate us from all beside.

Let us cultivate more of the spirit of grateful recollections, calling to mind more all the goodness poured into our lives since first we knew Him. Then with each remembrance' of His loving-kindness, with every recollection of times and places where He spoke in special ways to our hearts, we will be coming back, as Jacob did, and like him we too will raise our altars of praise. Thus our days will be more filled with the sacrifice of praise, be more of a psalm of joy over mercies past, more filled with a joyful confidence concerning what the coming days may hold for us. Such treasured memories of past benedictions will surely give us renewed faith and courage, and add increasingly to our anticipations of those joys to come when we shall see our God and Savior face to face.

- J. J. Blackburn.

The Plan of God -- In Brief

*"According to a Plan of the Ages, which He formed for the Anointed Jesus our Lord."
- Eph. 3:11 (Diaglott).*

STUDY 5 -- The Permission of Evil

Evil is that which produces unhappiness; anything which either directly or remotely causes suffering of any kind. -- Webster. This subject, therefore, not only inquires regarding human ailments, sorrows, pains, weaknesses and death, but goes back of all these to consider their primary cause -- sin -- and its remedy.

Since sin is the cause of evil, its removal is the only method of permanently curing the malady.

No difficulty, perhaps, more frequently presents itself to the inquiring mind than the questions, Why did God permit the present reign of evil? Why did He permit Satan to present the temptation to our first parents, after having created them perfect and upright? Or why did He allow the forbidden tree to have a place among the good? Despite all attempts to turn it aside, the question will obtrude itself -- Could not God have prevented all possibility of man's fall?

The difficulty undoubtedly arises from a failure to comprehend the plan of God. God could have prevented the entrance of sin, but the fact He did not should be sufficient proof to us that its present permission is designed ultimately to work out some greater good. God's plans, seen in their completeness, will prove the wisdom of the course pursued. Some inquire, Could not God, with whom all things are possible, have interfered in season to prevent the full accomplishment of Satan's design?

Doubtless He could; but such interference would have prevented the accomplishment of His own purposes. His purpose was to make manifest the perfection, majesty and righteous authority of His law, and to prove both to men and to angels the evil consequences resulting from its violation. Besides, in their very nature, some things are impossible even with God, as the Scriptures state. It is "impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18). "He cannot deny Himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). He cannot do wrong, and therefore He could not choose any but the wisest and best plan for introducing His creatures into life, even though our short-sighted vision might for a time fail to discern the hidden springs of infinite wisdom.

The Scriptures declare that all things were created for the Lord's pleasure (Revelation 4:11) -- without doubt, for the pleasure of dispensing His blessings, and of exercising the attributes of His glorious being. And though, in the working out of his benevolent designs, He permits evil and evil doers for a time to play an active part, yet it is not for evil's sake, not because He is in league with sin; for He declares that He is "not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness." (Psalm 5:4). Though opposed evil in every sense, God permits (i.e., does not hinder) it for a time, because His wisdom sees a way in which it may be made a lasting and valuable lesson to His creatures.

It is a self-evident truth that for every right principle there is a corresponding wrong principle; as, for instance, truth and falsity, love and hatred, justice and injustice. We distinguish these opposite principles as right and wrong, by their effects when put in action. That principle the result of which, when active, is beneficial and productive of ultimate order, harmony and happiness, we call a right principle; and the opposite, which is productive of discord, unhappiness and

destruction, we call a wrong principle. The results of these principles in action we call good and evil; and the intelligent being, capable of discerning the right principle from the wrong, and voluntarily governed by the one or the other, we call virtuous or sinful.

This faculty of discerning between right and wrong principles is called the moral sense, or conscience. It is by this moral sense which God has given to man that we are able to judge of God and to recognize that He is good. It is to this moral sense that God always appeals to prove His righteousness or justice; and by the same moral sense Adam could discern sin, or unrighteousness, to be evil, even before he knew all its consequences. The lower orders of God's creatures are not endowed with this moral sense. A dog has some intelligence, but not to this degree, though he may learn that certain actions bring the approval and reward of his master, and certain others his disapproval. He might steal or take life, but would not be termed a sinner; or he might protect property and life, but would not be called virtuous -- because he is ignorant of the moral quality of his actions.

God could have made mankind devoid of ability to discern between right and wrong, or able only to discern between right and wrong, or able only to discern and to do right; but to have made him so would have made him so would have been to make merely a living machine, and certainly not a mental image of His Creator. Or He might have made man perfect and a free agent, as He did, and have guarded him from Satan's temptation. In that case, man's experience being limited to good, he would have been continually liable to suggestions of evil from without, or to ambitions from within, which would have made the everlasting future uncertain, and an outbreak of disobedience and disorder might always have been a possibility besides which, good would never have been so highly appreciated except by its contrast with evil.

God first made His creatures acquainted with good, surrounding them with it in Eden; and afterward, as a penalty for disobedience, He gave them a severe knowledge of evil. Expelled from Eden and deprived of fellowship with Himself, God let them experience sickness, pain and death, that they might forever know evil and the inexpediency and exceeding sinfulness of sin.

By a comparison of results they came to an appreciation and proper estimate of both; "And the Lord said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." (Genesis 3:22). In this their posterity share, except that they first obtain their knowledge of evil, and cannot fully realize what good is until they experience it in the Millennium, as a result of their redemption by Him who will then be their Judge and King.

The moral sense, or judgment of right and wrong, and the liberty to use it, which Adam possessed, were important features of his likeness to God. The law of right and wrong was written in his natural constitution. It was part of his nature, just as it is a part of the divine nature. But let us not forget that this image or likeness of God, this originally law-inscribed nature of man, has lost much of its clear outline through the erasing, degrading influence of sin; hence it is not now what it was in the first man. Ability to love implies ability to hate; hence we may reason that the Creator could not make man in His own likeness, with power to love and to do right, without the corresponding ability to hate and to do wrong. This liberty of choice, termed free moral agency, or free will, is a part of man's original endowment; and this, together with the full measure of his mental and moral faculties, constituted him an image of his Creator. To-day, after six thousand years of degradation, so much of the original likeness has been erased by sin that we are not free, being bound, to a greater or less extent, by sin and its entailments, so that sin is now more easy and therefore more agreeable to the fallen race than is righteousness.

That God could have given Adam such a vivid impression of the many evil results of sin as would have deterred him from it, we need not question, but we believe that God foresaw that an actual experience of the evil would be the surest and most lasting lesson to serve man eternally; and for that reason God did not prevent but permitted man to take his choice, and to feel the consequences of evil. Had opportunity to sin never been permitted, man could not have resisted it, consequently there would have been neither virtue nor merit in his right-doing. God seeks such to worship Him as worship in spirit and in truth. He desires intelligent and willing obedience rather than ignorant mechanical service. He already had in operation inanimate mechanical agencies accomplishing His will, but His design was to make a nobler thing, an intelligent creature in His own likeness, a lord for earth, whose loyalty and righteousness would be based upon an appreciation of right and wrong, of good and evil.

The principles of right and wrong, as principles, have always existed, and must always exist; and all perfect, intelligent creatures in God's likeness must be free to choose either, though the right principle only will forever continue to be active. The Scriptures inform us that when the activity of the evil principle has been permitted long enough to accomplish God's purpose, it will forever cease to be active, and that all who continue to submit to its control shall forever cease to exist. (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26; Hebrews 2:14).

Right-doing and right-doers, only, shall continue forever.

God not only foresaw that, having given man freedom of choice, he would, through lack of full appreciation of sin and its results, accept it, but He also saw that, becoming acquainted with it, he would still choose it, because that acquaintance would so impair his moral nature that evil would gradually become more agreeable and more desirable to him than good. Still, God designed to permit evil, because, having the remedy provided for man's release from its consequences, He saw that the result would be to lead him, through experience, to a full appreciation of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" and of the matchless brilliancy of virtue in contrast with it -- teaching him the more to love and honor his Creator, who is the source and fountain of all goodness, and forever to shun that which brought so much woe and misery. So the final result will be greater love for God, and greater hatred of all that is opposed to His will, and consequently the firm establishment in everlasting righteousness of all such as shall profit by the lessons God is not teaching through the permission of sin and correlative evils. However, a wide distinction should be observed between the indisputable fact that God has permitted sin, and the serious error of some which charges God with being the author and instigator of sin. The latter view is both blasphemous and contradictory to the facts presented in the Scriptures. Those who fall into this error generally do so in an attempt to find another plan of salvation than that which God has provided through the sacrifice of Christ as our ransom-price. If they succeed in convincing themselves and others that God is responsible for all sin and wickedness and crime, and that man as an innocent tool in His hands was forced into sin, then they have cleared the way for the theory that not a sacrifice for our sins, nor mercy in any form, was needed, but simply and only JUSTICE. So, too, they lay a foundation for another part of their false theory, viz., universalism, claiming that as God caused all the sin and wickedness and crime in all, He will also cause the deliverance of all mankind from sin and death. And reasoning that God willed and caused the sin, and that none could resist Him, so they claim that when He shall will righteousness all will likewise be powerless to resist Him. But in all such reasoning, man's noblest quality, liberty of will or choice, the most striking feature of his likeness to his Creator, is entirely set aside; and man is theoretically degraded to a mere machine which acts only as it is acted upon. If this were the case, man, instead of being the lord of earth, would be inferior even to insects; for they undoubtedly have a will or power of choice. Even the little ant has been given a power of will which man, though by his greater power he may oppose and thwart, cannot destroy.

Many have imbibed the erroneous idea that God placed our race on trial for life with the alternative of eternal torture, whereas nothing of the kind is even hinted at in the penalty. The favor or blessing of God to His obedient children is life -- continuous life -- free from pain, sickness and every other element of decay and death. Adam was given this blessing in the full measure, but was warned that he would be deprived of this "gift" if he failed to render obedience to God -- "In the day that you eat thereof, dying, you shall die." He knew nothing of a life in torment, as the penalty of sin. Life everlasting is nowhere promised to any but the obedient. Life is God's gift, and death, the opposite of life, is the penalty He prescribes.

God assures us that as condemnation passed upon all in Adam, so He has arranged for a new head, father or life-giver for the race, into whom all may be transferred by faith; and that as all in Adam shared the curse of death, so all in Christ will share the blessing of life, being justified by faith in His blood. (Romans 5:12, 18, 19). So seen, the death of Jesus, the undefiled, the sinless one, was a complete settlement toward God of the sin of Adam. As one man had sinned, and all in him had shared his curse, his penalty, so Jesus, having paid the penalty of that one sinner, bought not only Adam, but all of his posterity -- all men -- who by heredity shared his weaknesses and sins and the penalty of these -- death. Our Lord, "the man Christ Jesus," Himself unblemished, approved, and with a perfect seed or race in him, unborn, likewise untainted with sin, gave His all of human life and title as the full ransom-price for Adam and the race or seed in him when sentenced.

And so it is written: "As all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive." Corrected translation, 1 Corinthians 15:22.

Those who can appreciate this feature of God's plan, which, by condemning all in one representative, opened the way for the ransom and restoration of all by one Redeemer, will find in it the solution of many perplexities. They will see that the condemnation of all in one was the reverse of an injury: it was a great favor to all when taken in connection with God's plan for providing justification for all through another one's sacrifice. Evil will be forever extinguished when God's purpose in permitting it shall have been accomplished, and when the benefits of the ransom are made co-extensive with the penalty of sin. It is impossible, however, to appreciate rightly this feature of the plan of God without a full recognition of the sinfulness of sin, the nature of its penalty -- death, the importance and value of the ransom which our Lord Jesus gave, and the positive and complete restoration of the individual to favorable conditions, conditions under which he will have full and ample trial, before being adjudged worthy of the reward (lasting life), or of the penalty (lasting death).

In view of the great plan of redemption, and the consequent "restoration of all things," through Christ, we can see that blessings result through permission of evil which, probably, could not otherwise have been so fully realized.

It seems clear that substantially the same law of God which is now over mankind, obedience to which has the reward of life, and disobedience the reward of death, must ultimately govern all of God's intelligent creatures; and that law, as our Lord defined it, is briefly comprehended in the one word, Love. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (Luke 10:27). Ultimately, when the purposes of God shall have been accomplished, the glory of the divine character will be manifest to all intelligent creatures, and the temporary permission of evil will be seen by all to have been a wise feature in the divine policy. Now, this can be seen only by the eye

of faith looking onward through God's Word at the things spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began -- the restoration of all things.

STUDY 6 -- The Day of Judgment

"God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteous by that man whom He hath ordained" -- "Jesus Christ, the righteous." "For the Father judges no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." -- Acts 17:31; 1 John 2:1; John 5:22.

A very vague and indefinite idea prevails in regard to the day of judgment.

The term judgment signifies more than simply the rendering of a verdict. It includes the idea of a trial, as well as a decision based upon that trial. And this is true not only of the English word judgment, but also of the Greek word which it translates.

The term day, both in the Scriptures and in common usage, though most frequently used to represent a period of twelve or twenty-four hours, really signifies any definite or special period of time. For instance, we speak of Noah's day, Luther's day.

Then again we read of the "day of Christ," the "day of judgment," and "His day" -- terms applicable to the Millennial age, in which Messiah will reign over, rule and judge the world in righteousness, granting trial as well as rendering sentence. And of that period it is written: He shall judge the world in righteousness, and in His day shall show who is that blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (Acts 17:31; 1 Timothy 6:15).

Why any should suppose this day of judgment to be of but twelve or twenty-four hours, while recognizing the wider meaning of the word day in other similar cases, is beyond comprehension, except upon the supposition that they have been influenced by tradition, without proper evidence or investigation.

Those who will carefully consult a complete concordance of the Bible with reference to the Day of Judgment, and note the kind and amount of work to be accomplished within that period, will soon see the absurdity of the common view, and the necessity for giving to the term day its wider significance.

The first great judgment [trial and sentence] was at the beginning, in Eden, when the whole human race, as represented in its head, Adam, stood on trial before God. The result of that trial was the verdict -- Guilty, disobedient, unworthy of life; and the penalty inflicted was death -- "Dying you shall die." (Genesis 2:17, margin). And so "In Adam all die." That trial time in Eden was the world's first judgment day, and the decision of the Judge (Jehovah) has ever since been enforced.

But God has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world individually. We are informed that when God gives the world this individual trial it will be under Christ as Judge, whom Jehovah will honor because of His obedience even unto death for our redemption. God has highly exalted Him, even to the divine nature, that He may be a Prince and a Savior (Acts 5:31), that He may be able to recover from death and grant judgment to all whom He purchased with His own precious blood. God has committed all judgment unto the Son, and has given Him all power in heaven and in earth. -- John 5:22.

It is, then, the highly exalted, glorified Christ, who so loved the world as to give His life as its ransom-price, who is to be the Judge of the world in its promised future trial. And it is Jehovah Himself who has appointed Him to that office, for that very purpose. Since such are the plain declarations of the Scriptures, there is nothing to dread, but on the contrary there is great cause for rejoicing on the part of all, in looking forward to the Judgment Day. The character of the Judge is a sufficient guarantee that the judgment will be just and merciful, and with due consideration for the infirmities of all, until the willing and obedient are brought back to the original perfection lost in Eden.

This coming judgment will be on exactly the same principles as the first. The same law of obedience will be presented, with the same reward of life, and the same penalty of death. And as the first trial had a beginning, progressed, and culminated with a sentence, so also will the second; and the sentence will be life to the righteous, and death to the unrighteous. The second trial will be more favorable than the first, because of the experience gained under the results of the first trial. Unlike the first trial, the second trial will be one in which every man will stand the test for himself alone, and not for another. None then will die because of Adam's sin, or because of inherited imperfections. It shall no more be said, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape and the children's teeth are set on edge; but he that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." "The soul that sins, it shall die." (Ezekiel 18:4; Jeremiah 31:29, 30). And it will be true of the world then, as it is of the Church now, that a man will not be judged according to that which he hath not, but according to that which he hath. (2 Corinthians 8:12). Under the reign of Christ, mankind will be gradually educated, trained and disciplined until they reach perfection. And when they have reached perfection, perfect harmony with God will be required, and any who then fall short of perfect obedience will be cut off, being judged unworthy of life. The sin which brought death to the race through Adam was simply one disobedient act; but by that act he fell from his perfection. God had a right to demand perfect obedience of him, since he was created perfect; and He will demand the same of all men when the great work of restoring them is complete. None will be permitted to have everlasting life who then in the slightest degree fall short of perfection. To fall short of perfection, then, will be to sin willfully against full light and perfect ability.

Any who sin willfully, against full light and ability, will perish in the second death. And should any one, during that age of trial, under its full blaze of light, spurn the offered favors, and make no progress toward perfection for a hundred years, he will be reckoned unworthy of life and will be "cut off," though at a hundred years he would be in the period of comparative childhood. So it is written of that day: "As a lad shall one die a hundred years old; and as a sinner shall be accursed he who dies at a hundred years old." (Isaiah 65:20 -- Lesser). All must have at least one hundred years of trial; and, if not so obstinate as to refuse to make progress, their trial will continue throughout the entire day of Christ, reaching a culmination only at its close.

The conclusion of the world's coming judgment is clearly shown in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46), in Revelation 20:15; 21:8 and in 1 Corinthians 15:25. These and other Scriptures show that at its close the two classes will have been completely separated -- the obedient and the disobedient; those in harmony with the letter and the spirit of God's law, and those out of harmony with it.

We do not wish to be understood as ignoring the present responsibility of the world, which every man has, according to the measure of light enjoyed, whether it be much or little, whether it be the light of nature or of revelation. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," and "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." (Proverbs 15:3; Eccl. 12:14). The good and the evil deeds of the

present time will receive a just recompense of reward either now or hereafter. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment, and some they follow after." (1 Timothy 5:24). No others than the Lord's favored "little flock" have as yet sufficient light to incur the final penalty, the second death.

Under the sophistries of the great deceiver, Satan, both the world and the Church nominal have been robbed of the blessed assurances of the coming time of righteous judgment. They know that the Bible tells of a coming judgment day, but they regard it with only fear and dread; and because of this fear, there is to them no more unwelcome tidings than that the day of the Lord is at hand. They put it far away from them, and do not wish to hear it even mentioned. They have no idea of the blessings in store for the world under that glorious reign of Him whom God hath appointed to judge the world in righteousness.

Among the greatest of the blinding influences which Satan has devised to keep men in ignorance of the truth regarding the judgment day have been the errors which have crept into the creeds and hymn books of the various religious sects. Many have come to esteem these errors as of paramount importance to the Word of God.

How differently did the prophets and apostles regard that promised day of judgment! Note the exultant prophetic utterance of David (1 Chronicles 16:31-34). He says: "Let the heavens be glad, And let the earth rejoice; And let men say among the nations, Jehovah reigns.

Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; Let the fields rejoice, and all that are therein.

Then shall the trees of the wood sing aloud At the presence of Jehovah, Because He comes to judge the earth.

Oh give thanks unto Jehovah, for He is good; For His mercy endures forever."

To the same day the Apostle also points, assuring us that it will be a glorious and desirable day, and that for it the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together -- waiting for the great Judge to deliver and to bless the world, as well as to exalt and glorify the Church -- Romans 8:21, 22.

In John 5:28, 29 a precious promise for the world of a coming judgment-trial for life everlasting is, by a mistranslation, turned into a fearful imprecation. According to the Greek, they that have done evil -- that have failed of divine approval -- will come forth unto resurrection [raising up to perfection] by judgments, "stripes," disciplines. -- See the Revised Version.

- C. T. Russell

(to be continued)

Doctrine According to Godliness

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." - 1 Thess. 5:21.

DO NOT, brethren, shrink from the duty of searching God's Word for yourselves, through fear of human censure and denunciation. Do not think that you may innocently follow the opinions, which prevail around you, without investigation, on the ground that Christianity is now so purified from errors, as to need no laborious research. There is much reason to believe, that Christianity is at this moment dishonored by gross and cherished corruptions. If you remember the darkness, which hung over the gospel for ages; if you consider the impure union, which still subsists in almost every Christian country between the church and the state, and which enlists men's selfishness, and ambition, on the side of established error; if you recollect in what degree the spirit of intolerance has checked free inquiry, not only before, but since the reformation; you will see that Christianity cannot have freed itself from all the human inventions which disfigured it under the papal tyranny. No, much stubble is yet to be burnt; much rubbish to be removed; many gaudy decorations, which a false taste has hung around Christianity, must be swept away; and the earth-born fogs, which have long shrouded it, must be scattered, before this divine fabric will rise before us in its native and awful majesty, in its harmonious proportions, in its mild and celestial splendors.

This glorious reformation in the church, we hope, under God's blessing, from the demolition of human authority in matters of religion, from the fall of those hierarchies, huge establishments, general convocations or assemblies, and other human institutions, by which the minds of individuals are oppressed under the weight of numbers, and a papal dominion is perpetuated in the Protestant church. Our earnest prayer to God is, that he will "overturn and overturn and overturn" the strong hold of spiritual usurpation, "until He shall come, whose right it is" to rule the minds of men; that the conspiracy of ages against the liberty of Christians may be brought to an end; that the servile assent, so long yielded to human creeds, may give place to honest and fearless inquiry into the Scriptures; and that Christianity thus purified from error, may put forth its almighty energy, and prove itself, by its ennobling influence on the mind, to be indeed "the power of God unto salvation."

- W. E. Channing (1819)

Final Words

(Closing paragraphs by H. Gratton Guinness in his volume
"The Approaching End of the Age" written in 1879.)

THE prospect of the judgments which are to bring to a close this dispensation, and which are described in terms of appalling strength by inspired apostles (2 Thess 2; 2 Peter 3; Rev 18; Rev 19), cannot in itself be an attractive one to the Christian heart. It must, when they realize it, excite in his people, the compassions of Christ; and incline them, as they see the ungodly turning from the only way of escape, to weep, as their Master wept over Jerusalem, in the prospect of its coming doom, and to exclaim with Him, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace I But now they are hid from thine eyes!"

Yet, while sorrowing in Christlike compassion, we can also acquiesce in Christlike righteousness with the just judgments of God. It needs but a glance over the wide extent and awful character of the evils which those judgments are to remove, and the unspeakable, multiplied, and universal blessings which they are to introduce; to make a true Christian even from motives of humanity desire the hastening of the day of God. If use had not familiarized us with the miseries born of sin, if our standard of human duty and human privilege, had not been debased by ages of acquaintance with things as they are, if our ideal of the destiny of mankind was the true one, -- that it is, "to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever," -- the present state of the wide world would fill us with grief and amazement, and with impatient longings for a change.

Where in the wide world can we then find purity and peace? Where holiness and happiness? Oh, the foul lives, the defiled consciences, the troubled minds, the broken hearts, the crying oppressions, the multiplied miseries of our race! What a world of sin and woe is contained in that one word, WAR, and in that other word, SLAVERY! What famines and pestilences, and revolutions and massacres arise from MISGOVERNMENT! How truly the whole creation groans, and travails in pain together, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God I The deepest and truest compassion for the sufferings of humanity must prompt the cry, How long, O Lord? And apart altogether from the joy that is to be brought to her by the revelation of Jesus Christ, the church must long for his coming, that the creation itself may be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Israel's conversion, and the world's jubilee of liberty and gladness, date alike from the coming of the Lord with all his saints, to execute judgment on the ungodly. Of the blessed condition of things which shall succeed, during the world's millennial sabbath, Scripture gives many a glorious sketch! and though we may be, and must be, unable to image it to ourselves in its detail, we know its broad essential features, and they imply almost all we can desire. Satan, the source of all sin, the great deceiver and seducer of men, is to be bound, imprisoned, rendered perfectly powerless and inoperative; Christ, the source of all blessing, spiritual and temporal, is to reign, to govern the nations of the earth Himself, suffering no sin or oppression, and protecting the poor and needy. The seventy-second Psalm, the thirty-second chapter of Isaiah, and similar scriptures, describe his glorious, peaceful, righteous reign, and its blessed results to mankind.

And while compassion for our fellow-creatures would make us long for the dawn of the day of Christ, how much more, desire for his glory! Can we, who own Him Lord, be content to have Him despised and rejected still by his ancient people Israel, denied, mocked, and insulted by the vast infidel host, displaced from his rightful throne, by this self-styled Vicar on earth, robbed of all his peculiar glories by an apostate priesthood, unknown to the great majority of the sinners He died to save, poorly obeyed and honoured by his best friends and followers, and practically

forgotten and disowned by the mass of those who bear his name? Can we be content with a continuance of this treatment of the only begotten Son in whom God is well-pleased? Can we endure to see this treatment still accorded to Him Who for our sakes humbled Himself and became of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross? Is He to have nothing but what He had before, the adoration and love of the heavenly hosts? Or, rather, is not every knee to bow to Him, and every tongue to confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father? Are not our hearts impatient for the day when earth shall own her King, and Israel its Messiah, and our blessed Lord alone be exalted? Do we not cry, --

Our longing eyes would fain behold
That bright and blessed brow,
Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear
Its crown of glory now?

And does not the cry gush from the depth of our souls? The near approach of the day of Christ, must rejoice the heart that adores Him; for never till then will He have his rightful place, or receive from the sons of men, the love and the submission which He so richly deserves.

And without being selfish, we rejoice and must rejoice for our own sakes in the prospect of the near approach of the end of the age, notwithstanding its accompanying judgments.

For whatever the exact portion it may bring to others, whatever its immediate and precise effect on Israel, on Christendom, and on the heathen nations of the earth, -- and there maybe room for some doubts and differences of opinion as to these, -- there can be no question whatever, as to the portion it brings to the true church and to each individual Christian. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the dead in Christ shall rise, and the living "in Christ" be changed, the corruptible put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality, when the Lord Himself descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God; we shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be for ever with the Lord. We shall see Him, and be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; we shall go in, clad in pure linen, clean and white, to the marriage supper of the Lamb; we shall, as his blood-bought bride, sit with Him on his throne, and share his glory, according to his word, "the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given them." Simple, clear, abundant, and unmistakable are the predictions with reference to our portion at the coming of the Lord. "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to those that trouble you; and to you Who are troubled REST WITH US when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when He shall come to be GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS, AND ADMIRERD IN ALL THEM THAT BELIEVE in that day" (2 Thess. 1.6-10).

Rest! that is to be one feature of our portion, rest with Christ, rest with the saints and martyrs that are gone before. Rest from conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; rest from the life and walk of faith, in the more glorious life and walk of sight, for we shall behold his face, and see Him, whom not having seen we love; rest of heart in love's full fruition, in complete and eternal union with our Lord, -- the marriage of the Lamb; rest of mind, in perfect knowledge, for then shall we know, even as also we are known; rest from the burden of this body of humiliation, rest from laboring in vain, and spending our strength for nought, rest from all care and fear, from all strife, and all pain and sorrow; and from the heart-ache produced by the daily sights and sounds of ungodliness. The day of Christ shall bring rest to the weary! Nor rest only, but fulness of joy,

and pleasures for evermore | The joy of seeing HIM glorified and acknowledged by all, and the joy of being glorified and acknowledged ourselves by Him; the joy of perfect holiness, the joy of possessing a new and incorruptible spiritual body in which to serve Him as we cannot do here, and to enjoy his glory, as would now be impossible. "Beloved! now are we the sons of God; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."

Ours shall be the joy, not only of being like Him ourselves, but of beholding all those we love like Him also -- the joy of seeing eye to eye, and of having every feeling in perfect unison, with all the children of God, the joy of meeting the saints of other days, the patriarchs and prophets and apostles, and the noble army of martyrs; of seeing, crowned with crowns of life, those who loved not their lives to the death -- the joy of unhindered communion and worship, the joy of perpetual and perfect service. And all these joys sweetened by the assurance that they are ours for ever, that we shall go no more out from the temple of the immediate presence of God, that we are to be for ever with the Lord! Earth's millennium is to end, like all previous dispensations, in apostasy and judgment; but to the risen saints no change; no apostasy can ever come. Christ is their life; because He lives, they live also, in Him and with Him indissolubly and eternally one. Their eternal state begins at his Epiphany, at the Second Advent for which we wait.

Brethren, are these things so? *Have* we a hope thus full of glory, and *does* our hope draw nigh, yea very nigh? "What manner of persons then ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

Diligence

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

Those of us who are striving to attain victory in the race set before us, realize the winning of a race means effort-enthusiastic effort, diligent effort prompted by deep-rooted heart convictions. Thus our diligence is to be exercised within ourselves if we would be used by the Lord in helping others. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. 4:23.) In this text Solomon uses the Hebrew word *mishmar* which refers to a guard, a deposit, a usage, an example, watch, prison, ward. Cook translates this: "Above all keeping, keep thine heart." Rotherham and Leeser translate it, "Above all that must be guarded, keep thine heart."

The outflowing of heart promptings may be likened to the flow of water from a spring. It is our desire to keep this overflow pure, healthful, refreshing. The springs of the East, like their water wells, were jealously guarded. A stone was frequently rolled across the entrance and the opening closed. A closed spring was called a sealed spring and thus became a type of all that must be most diligently guarded. The inner thoughts, the thoughts of the heart, are thus like a spring of water which must be kept pure to be effectively used by our Lord. "Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth." (Col. 3:5.) "For they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." - Gal. 5:24.

But keeping the heart implies more than physical action. It means the putting on the mind or will of Christ in our faithful performance of the will of the Father. The human will has a natural tendency downward. The mind of Christ lifts us to the better things we seek. The Scriptures admonish us that this human tendency must be mortified, deadened, killed. In proportion as we heed the teachings of our Lord, we grow nearer to God and his likeness. We become more meek, more gentle, ever increasing in the fruits of the holy spirit and in the character-likeness of Jesus our Messiah and Example. As we apply the teachings of divine love we find our efforts assailed by weakness of the flesh and natural human desires which would thwart our holy and pure efforts, intentions, and ambitions. Mental and spiritual vigilance, diligent, continuous effort is required if success is to be attained. The sooner we comprehend this great truth, the sooner we overcome our self-satisfied complacency, the better it will be for us. Complacency is entirely too common in these last days.

Perhaps this is because we wrestle not against flesh and blood alone, but against the devil himself. (Eph. 6:11, 12.) "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Pet. 5:8.) Therefore, "When thou goest with thine adversary before the magistrate-give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him." (Luke 15:58.) Satan is the accuser of the brethren. (Rev. 12:10.) This expression, "give diligence," is exceedingly old. It is not a Latinism, but is found in the Oxyrhynchus Papyri of the second century before Christ. It means to work hard, to do your best. Rotherham translates this text, "Take pains to get a release from him." We know, this can be done through the grace given us by our Lord.

Manifestly the Lord's people will occupy different places in the Body of Christ. We differ in opportunity, in ability, in understanding. But whether we are a Thomas, a Peter, a Paul, or a John, in our ministry to others we are urged to exercise simplicity, diligence, cheerfulness. (Rom. 12:8.) The sixth to the tenth verses of the twelfth chapter of Romans are well worth our study in this connection. Even translators differ in their understanding of the Greek. Rotherham says, "He that

ruleth with diligence," while the Syriac reads, "The presider [or the one standing at the head] with dexterity."

The word used for diligent in the Greek is *ergasia*. The same word is used in 2 Cor. 8:7 and is translated by Bullinger: "In all diligence or in all carefulness." Rotherham gives us, "in all earnestness," but the Diaglott is still different: "But as you abound in everything, in faith, and in the Word, and in knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this free gift also" - the gift of our all to the service of our God. All brothers and sisters in Christ are designated as leaders in some capacity. We are glad to observe so many of them are keeping their lamps trimmed and burning. (Matt. 25.) Let us not bury our talent.

In Hebrews the Apostle Paul had been speaking to the Church as a whole, but in Heb. 6:11 he urges each one individually to diligently seek the full assurance of faith and hope that they should inherit the promises. The Syriac reads: "And we desire, that each one of you may show this same activity, for the completion of your hope." The warning is that after accepting Jesus as our Messiah, if we go back to the Mosaic Law and Judaism, we will cut ourselves off (Gal. 5:4), as there is no more Messiah to be looked for. By rejecting our Lord we put him to open shame; thus Paul's warning remains as a solemn admonition to all who profess to believe.

"Provide in your faith, honesty, virtue, purity." (2 Pet. 1:5.) *If* you have God's gifts, prove you have them by using them. "Yea, and for this reason," God began his good work in us. We must build on, "contributing all diligence." It is only a little we can do at best. It is only by diligent culture, Christian graces can grow. It is in this diligence we make our offering, while God works in us to both will and do 'his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13.) Thus it is that God's gift of faith must be evidenced by our fruits of faith. Energy, diligence must be exhibited in the life of the consecrated. When this has the support of understanding we know we are 'not of the sleepy virgin class because our talents are wisely used. "In your faith exercise virtue and in your virtue knowledge."

"Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence" because, by the constant possession and increase of God's graces we become more fruitful. Our increase in diligent zeal may be attributed to our intelligent use of the graces God has already given. As we increase in knowledge and apply our hearts to God's beneficent plans and purposes, we will be able to produce greater fruitage. Our calling and election must be made sure. If we neglect the conditions we will lose the prize. The Diaglott rendering of 2 Pet. 1:10 is, "More earnestly endeavor to make your calling and election sure," while the Syriac reads, "be exceedingly diligent." Christians may *stumble*, but Peter desires to keep them from *falling*.

Again we have the admonition by the Apostle Jude, who was a half-uncle of our Lord and a full brother of Salome the mother of James and John. Dr. Cook translates Jude 3, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you and exhort you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." In this case the word diligence is used to translate the Greek word *spoude*, meaning dispatch, eagerness, earnestness, carefulness, diligence, instant, haste. Diligence here indicates that the writer's chief care was to warn the Church against false teachers. The Diaglott gives it, "making all haste," while the Syriac says, "I take all pains to write."

To earnestly contend for the faith conveys the thought of enthusiastic diligence. Stress should be laid on our sincerity, our honesty in being instant in service, both in season and out of season to us. We are to serve those needing us, not only when it is convenient, but also at times when it puts us to a lot of trouble. At all times we are to defend the truth diligently and earnestly as given us by the Scriptures. Our contending is to be *for* the faith and not *about* the faith. The implication is that those who are

contentious will never attain the highcalling because of their wrong activity. Their attitude indicates a conceited and selfish condition of heart. They think more of their own opinion than they do of the warnings of the Word of God. The diligent, earnest contention which our Father will approve is prompted by a desire to have whatever the Scriptures teach, irrespective of preconceived ideas of personal preference. In all of our activities for the truth we should diligently manifest the fruits of the holy spirit of Christ-gentleness, brotherly kindness, spiritual understanding, godly love and affection for those who are struggling to master self and progress in the narrow way of righteousness.

Again we have the urge to prompt, intense effort in 2 Tim. 4:9. Paul was nearing the end of his earthly ministry. He needed the prompt assistance of Timothy. He wrote, "Do thy diligence to come unto me." How strange we should ever put off for some more convenient time, any service we can render to any of the Lord's people in assisting the efficiency of their ministry. The Concordant translation of this text reads, "Endeavor to :come to me quickly." The Syriac gives us, "Exert thyself to come quickly." The Diaglott reads, "Do thy best to come to me soon."

All of this means constructive action, prompt action with the object of bringing praise to our God and a blessing to his people. The service of some is motivated by fear. With some it is superstition.

The zeal of some is more or less ephemeral, while others are deceptive in presenting false teachings. The true servant of the Most High serves because of heart conviction and because of devout, loving loyalty. He serves in the sincere hope that he may be pleasing to his Lord irrespective of reward. That there is a reward is beyond question, but we do not love him because of reward. We love him because he first loved us. (1 John 4:19.) We realize our Lord's work began first in ourselves, and he will finish that work.

Thus we follow our Lord's example in extending help to others. One of our most precious privileges in diligent helpfulness is that of extending a helping hand to those of like precious faith in their efforts to be diligent in service. Faith, fortitude, and knowledge prepare God's people to have patience with every effort put forth by others, irrespective of how weak they may be. Diligent patience is required in dealing with the poor, blinded world. Diligent, tactful patience is required in helping "babes in Christ," in the task of encouraging the slow and the stupid, the excitable and the blundering, the over-confident and the skeptical. The worldly-minded and many of the Lord's consecrated are lacking in faith, fortitude and spiritual knowledge. They fall ready prey to unrest, fatigue and the wrong interpretation of the plain statements of Scripture.

All of this leads us back again to our own personal need. Let us, be diligent in our devout. services. Let us be diligent, constant, in controlling the use of our loving, reverent service for our Father. Let us be diligent in bringing our all into cheerful, loving conformity to his will -- diligent fervency of spirit. Let us remember facts. No race, no battle will ever be won without diligent, enthusiastic effort. It costs something and the child of God must pay the price. If there is no cross there will be no crown. Piety and goodness spring from appreciative, grateful hearts who spontaneously delight in meditation upon God's precepts and promises. In secret communion with our God we offer our prayers and our praise for every opportunity to serve him, to help our brethren, to let the light of our spiritual understanding shine forth in a world of perplexity and doubt.

At best we are but dust. When we have done all we can. do, we find the only value in our effort is that supplied by our Lord. We do not dare trust our own righteousness. By faith we fold about us the ample robe of Christ's righteousness and, with constant diligence, work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that holiness in service without which no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12:14.) Let, us be diligent.

- C. G. Reynolds.

The Cross and the Evangel

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." - Romans 5:1.

IN THESE words Paul reaches a climax. It is not only a culmination to his argument but also in his experience. It is his own triumphant declaration of his standing before God, his liberation from the past and his security for the future. He has "passed from death unto life" (John 5:24). But his experience is not, in his view, peculiar to himself. "We are justified," he says, writing to people he had never seen. "We have peace with God." "We have access into this grace wherein we stand." "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." This is the one universal Christian experience.

The evangelist when setting forth the love of God revealed in Christ and the claim made for the Cross, is wholly right. The proved historic facts and the confirming experience of every day are with him. Every religious movement, as it affects either an individual or a community which leaves out the redeeming Cross, ends like a desert stream, in a marsh. The New Testament knows no gospel except that of the evangelist. In the teaching of Jesus, especially in the words which give preeminence to His death, in the preaching of the Apostles and the appeals of the Epistles, the supreme topic is the Cross and its redeeming sacrifice. The great Christian men and women who have spread abroad Christ's name and hazarded their lives for His sake, whose sanctity has influenced others for the Gospel, have all stood at the foot of the Cross. All who have had a common experience of pardon, peace and purity, with united breath ascribe their victory to the Lamb.

Let us, then, set the Cross in its place in the Christian life. How does it come into Christian experience? Fundamentally, the heart is the same in every man and woman, and the whole experience is wrought in us by the Holy Spirit of God.

A SENSE OF NEED

Every Christian life begins in a *sense of need*. It may be, as it has been in young, innocent people, simply a sense of the need of God. It may be a desire for a greater purity and simplicity of life. This may be the experience of those who have been saddened by the world's sin, or startled by their own tempting thoughts of evil. It may be a discontent with low secular and frivolous things and a craving after a deeper, truer, braver, purer life. Sometimes a devout and attractive personality throws a selfish character into relief, and at once rebukes and charms. Sometimes a sudden sorrow quenches the dazzling sunshine. The cheapness and emptiness of a worldly life are seen, and the sense of need becomes a hunger of spirit, or it may be that some sin, or some sudden and hateful deed of evil, rouses the person, and fills the heart and even the face with shame. It brings in a sense of weakness and helplessness, and the sense of need is felt in such an hour. Or it may be that passions rise again and again in flood to mock at all restraint. For as rivers in sun-scorched countries often flow down beneath their dry beds, so this hunger and thirst persists even when life is profligate. Yet in whatever aspect it may present itself, this sense of need, created in us by God's Spirit, is the beginning of Christian experience. "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."

EFFORT TO SATISFY THE NEED

The second stage is *the effort to satisfy this need*. There is usually some such effort. Evil habits are abandoned. Tempting and seducing companions are avoided. Homes and haunts of peril are shunned. There may be recourse to worship and to prayer. There may be some reading of the Bible and of religious books. A new interest in the Church and in Christian service may be aroused. The whole tone of life has a new seriousness. If the sense of need has been vivid and imperative, the effort to satisfy it is often earnest and costly. Some of the most striking passages in religious biography are concerned with this ardent effort to satisfy this sense of need. But this second stage has only one sufficient ending, and that is at the Cross.

THREE PATHS TO THE CROSS

The third decisive stage is *peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, which is given only at the Cross*. There are in the New Testament records three spiritual experiences which disclose in clear detail three paths to the Cross. These are the spiritual experiences of Peter, John, and Paul. God's way with these three great believers was not set down simply as a study for students. They were "written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." They declare, it would seem, three ways by one of which every Christian enters into peace with God.

PETER'S EXPERIENCE

When we study the spiritual experience of Peter we find that he stands out as an example of followers of the Lord who find themselves at the foot of the Cross after professing their faith in Christ quite sincerely without realizing what it should mean. As they endeavour to follow Christ, He unveils them to themselves, and makes Himself known to them. Instances of strong oscillations in Peter's thoughts and words occur frequently before our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross. At one moment he says, "Depart from me for I am a sinful man, O Lord"; at the next, we read, "they" including Peter, "forsook all, and followed Him." At one moment he confesses Christ, as Son of the living God; at the next he rebukes Him, as though He were but a sinful man like himself. At one moment he says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet"; at the next, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." At one moment he is ready to fight the whole band of soldiers almost alone; at the next he is shrinking away before one little maid. But by gentle rebuke of their faults and by ever keener reproach of their low ideals, and by correcting their mistakes, Christ guides and quickens such sincere and honest hearts. To all such simple believers there comes the day of awakening; the more honest they are the earlier it comes. Such an one may fall into sin which is loathsome to him. The world may never know it. His life may seem the same to his dearest friend, but his shallow peace has gone. Just as Peter when he denied his Lord realized that his need was not only to know Christ's word, not only to esteem His character, not only to follow in His steps in the moment of high elation, but a new sense of need had suddenly developed into his heart. He had become conscious that his need was the forgiveness of sins. *It was a, short step then to the Cross*. As he turned to the Cross on which his guilt had been expiated he entered a new realm. Christ had become not only Teacher, Friend, and Master; He had become the Redeemer who bore his sins "in His own body on the tree."

JOHN'S EXPERIENCE

A second way to the Cross is mirrored in the experience of John. There are young and sheltered lives which have grown up amid the obedience of a devout home. A godly parentage, a careful training, and the example of a winsome Christian life have wrought out in them a natural Christian outlook. They have grown up measurably unspotted from the world. But as the years increase, their growth in the knowledge of Christ quickens their spiritual insight and gives them a keener sense of sin. The awful power of the world, the flesh and the devil dismays them. They see men and women they love blinded and seduced by Satan. And as they turn their eyes more and more on Christ they discover how far they themselves are from His holiness, and how near akin to the passion-driven sinner. They see more clearly than others the beauty of Christ and therefore feel more keenly the great gulf between them and Christ's perfect holiness. *It is a short step for these, also, to the Cross.* Seeing right into the world's sin and evil, knowing their own heart and confessing its weakness and sinfulness, they look up to find God reconciling and forgiving them in the Cross. The words of Christ are their music; but the death of Christ is life and peace. With Paul and Peter they say, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

PAUL'S EXPERIENCE

The third way to the Cross is seen in the experience of Paul. Strip his early life history of all that is accidental to him, his Hebrew birth and training, his peculiar environment, and we find he stands out as the type of men who have gone badly astray. Paul was by nature an eager, restless, tireless man, who lived intensely. Paul did not plunge into profligate riot or base self-indulgence. He did not engage in the questionable methods of the man of the world. He had no bitter animosity to religion. But uncleanness of thought and lewdness of mind are not the only sins of corrupt hearts. When Paul came to himself, long after he had tried to satisfy his sense of need in Pharisaic zeal, he realized how far he had gone astray. He saw the willfulness, and the hate, and the proud ambition which had governed his heart. The mercilessness of his threatenings was ever in his ear. The stain of murder was red on his hands. No man awakened to find the hideousness of his sin, and smitten into despair by finding how far he is away from God and from goodness, ever endured greater agony than Paul. He never forgot the terrified faces of humble believers. He never forgot Stephen's wonderful peace in dying. That was one of the heaviest stones of his bruising. He never forgot his own blasphemies. He never forgot the face of Jesus whom he was persecuting. He stands for the type of all men who have wanton lives, polluted hearts and condemning memories. *From such a place of torture it is a short step to the Cross.* That sense of need is not quenched by a few prayers. A man cannot begin to be a good man when he is cursed by a bad conscience. An accusing record stands out in deeper crimson at every thought of God and His holiness. But when such erring and guilty men see God in Christ, see His love blotting out the handwriting that is against them: when they come to believe that God loves them and has provided the means of reconciliation through the blood of the Cross, they meekly accept pardon and pass into peace. A new life, a new joy, a new devotion arises in their heart. Their Christian life begins at the Cross.

FROM THE CROSS TO RESURRECTION CHANGE

There is one further stage in the experience of the Cross, and that is the pilgrimage from the foot of the Cross to our resurrection change into the likeness of Christ, to be in His presence for ever. We are not saved entirely by one look at the Crucified One. The Cross can be never out of sight of the Christian. Ever and again in our pilgrimage on earth we come to the place where there

stands always, appealing and uplifting, the Cross of Christ. When we slip and fall, and our faces are filled with shame, our hearts bowed down by guilt, we kneel again at the foot of the Cross. When we face tribulation and the trials of life, or we drink the cup of pain, or see some cherished earthly hope failing, we find our strength in the Cross of Christ. When worldliness or apathy damps our ardor, or our taste for goodness fails in our hearts, we are revived again only by the Cross. The sorrows of life are hallowed, its joys consecrated, as we turn again and again for light, for courage, and for help to the Cross.

In closing let us press the natural question of our text. Are you justified by faith and have you peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ? You may know much of Christ's wisdom and rejoice in His moral loveliness. You may believe Him to be the Saviour of many. But you are not really a Christian at all until you have believed this good news that you are reconciled to God, and have entered into peace.

The sense of need and the sense of helplessness lead us all to the Cross which lifts the burden no human soul can bear. Then we can say with all saints, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- *Forest Gate Bible Monthly.*

CONSECRATION

Father, whate'er of earthy bliss
Thy sovereign will denies,
Accepted at thy throne of grace,
Let this petition rise.

Give me a calm, a thankful heart
From every murmur free;
The blessings of thy grace impart,
And make me live to thee.

Let the sweet thought that thou art mine
My every hour attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey's end.

TRUTH

"TRUTH, like silver, must be not only mined, but also refined, separated from dross, before its value can be appreciated. The things here stated in few words will be proved point by point; and while many may prefer to take a statement without the trouble of verifying it from the Scriptures, this will not be the case with the real truthseeker. He must, so far as possible, make every point and argument and proof his own, direct from God's Word, by tracing all the connections, and thus convincing himself of the truthfulness of the account presented.

Though the Lord provides it, and the servants bring forth the "meat in due season for the household," yet each, to be strengthened thereby, must eat for himself."

- C. T. Russell

Entered Into Rest

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