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Does the New Creature Die?

"... if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature..." -- 2 Corinthians 5:17

One religious fallacy has existed since the very earliest of times. The damage caused by this error has exceeded all others. What is it? It is the theory that there is somewhere in man an ethereal principle or intangible entity. It is this which man has named "immortality" or the "undying soul." Those who accept this teaching believe that when a man dies (ending life as we know it), his "soul" (possessing a consciousness independent of the fleshly body) continues to exist. Although this theory is unfounded by both Scripture and logic, it has attracted millions of adherents.

What is the soul? Many people have attempted to answer this question. Some time ago the British author of a so called "new theology" offered this explanation:

Your soul is your own individualized consciousness of life. But it will never really be yours till you find that it embraces and includes all life. You are here to lift your consciousness of being into that eternal glorious blessedness which is the manifest unity of the love of God.

Man has accepted the "immortal soul" theory for as long as we can trace recorded history. Before the days of Jesus, the philosopher Socrates taught this doctrine in Athens. Socrates' disciple, Plato, gave it to the world in his writings too. Zoroaster, Aristotle, Stahl, Descarte, John Bunyan, Spurgeon, Talmage, and others have expanded upon this one error which is so basic that any deductions which are based upon it must, of necessity, be false.

But a similar question has arisen in the minds of Bible students. Does the new creature die? The question might be summarized like this: Jesus became a new creature at the time of his baptism at Jordan; did he die as a new creature at Calvary? Or did the man Jesus die on the cross and the new creature continue living? Or just what did die in Jesus' case?

To be perplexed by such thoughts is to misunderstand what the new creature is. Such accept the same idea with regard to the new creature that the proponents of Platonic philosophy teach about the soul -- that it is an invisible, ethereal entity which exists *within* man. Such confuse the soul with the new mind.

The Bible does not say that consecration and spirit begetting bring the entrance of a new creature into a man. The Word says that the man *becomes* a new creature. This is a very different thing. If John Smith becomes a doctor, what part of him is a doctor? Why, the whole man, of course. Both his mind and his body are employed in the work of healing people. We cannot separate the man into two parts and say that one part (the mind) is the doctor, and the other part (the body) is not.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature..." Our text does not say that he has a new creature. What has entered into the man is a new way of thinking, one which is due to the functioning committed creature. Now he is living for *new* things, the things of God. He is, therefore, a new creature.

Some may suggest that the new creature is the Christian's prospect of a future life. Does Paul not say, *"... I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day"* (2 Tim. 1:12)? But the new creature is not the prospect of a future life, and there is no scriptural statement to warrant so thinking. Others may suggest that it is the life which we now enjoy from God, but this view, too, is not scripturally correct.

Let us examine several of Jesus' sayings to establish these points. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me path everlasting life"* (John 6:47). Seven verses later Jesus said, *"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* If he already possessed eternal life, why should he need to be raised up at the last day? Manifestly, Jesus meant that such life would be reckoned to the one who complied with the expressed terms. Eternal life would be "put down" to his credit in the Book of Life. If that were not the case, and if one actually possessed eternal life at this time, then when the Christian dies, death would only be a sham and not a reality, and those who accept the Platonic philosophy would be right after all.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope [or a hope of life]" (1 Pet. 1:3). If we were already alive -- possessing even a spark of immortality -- why should we be said to possess *a hope* of life? Further, we are said to be *"... saved by hope..."* (Rom. 8:24). *"Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Rom. 6:11).

The Christian does indeed enjoy a prospect of future life and a glorious hope of such life. But neither the prospect nor the hope is the new creature. The prospect is preserved in the mind of God, or in the book of divine remembrance, and it is never blotted out of that book or removed if the Christian remains faithful unto death.

Jesus' Case

Our Master's new creature was the man Christ Jesus doing the Father's work, calling his disciples, and attending to his ministry. To some this may seem a small matter, but it is important because it reaches to the roots of the biblical philosophy of the Ransom: *"... the wages of sin is death..."* (Rom. 6:23). The theory of the immortality of the soul requires that the punishment for sin would be some form of suffering after the death of the body. But the Scriptures teach that release from the death state must come from some outside power, one which is competent to regenerate (to give new life to) the being, or soul. Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9, "experienced, tried, made proof of": see Liddell and Scott, *Greek Lexicon*).

Our Lord thus removed the obstacle of judicial disability imposed on the race by the death sentence *on* Father Adam. He has also received the power (John 17:2; 5:21-27) to again give life to whomever he chooses (Matt. 11:27). The specter of eternal torment has thus been forever banished. And both the "regeneration" (Matt. 19:28) and also the "... *restitution of all things, which God bath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets...*" (Acts 3:21) shall be made operative by the great Redeemer and Life-giver to all the willing and obedient.

- Walter Sargeant

When Light Is Darkness

"... *If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!*" - Matthew 6:23

Because of our fallen condition we all have inherited a number of traits which we choose to avoid (and if possible to ignore). We see one of these tendencies in reference to our handling of the Word of God. We all, to a greater or lesser degree, distort and twist the Scriptures to fit the meaning we have already decided upon. This is clearly seen in the doctrines taught by theologians. Their ideas often contradict the teachings of other theological schools -- even though both schools use the same source of reference: the Bible.

We each may easily miss the point of any Scripture because of our familiarity with it; because we may consider that its truth lies on the surface. To be plain about this point: We think that we already know what the words mean. Our theme text is among those which are easily misconstrued. This verse is often interpreted by applying it to one who has enjoyed the light of "present truth" and then goes into darkness. Note that Jesus did not say "if you go out of the light you will be in darkness." Instead, he said "if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

A Paradox

At first reading there appears to be a paradox in these words. Yet, we know that Jesus never taught except by using apt illustrations. How can light be darkness? In seeking an answer we must not interpret the words apart from their context (Matt. 6:19-24).

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth ... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:19-21). Jesus then makes a transition in thought.

The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness (Matt. 6:22).

We have stressed the word "that," because Jesus refers to a peculiar darkness. This is not a darkness occasioned by the absence of light. He says, *"if the light that is in thee be (not "become") darkness."*

The eye has no light of itself. It is a means of transmitting sensations which are caused by light to the optic cells of the brain. There, images are etched upon the brain. But if the eye is afflicted by color blindness, astigmatism, or cataract there is a degree of distortion invoked upon the image which the brain receives. The same is true of our individual conscience. We may, from the effects of past sin, weakness, lack of moral education, or from prejudice, be seeing things in a false light. Inevitably, such things are improperly judged. This is the darkness Jesus is talking about. The context (Matt. 6:19-24) is dealing with our "treasures." Jesus encourages us to use sound judgment: to recognize the true riches because we can not serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24) at the same time. This is not easy for us to do because what we can see is more easily and persuasively attractive than that which is unseen. What is tangible is more alluring than things which must be imagined. What is here now is easier to treasure than what is not of this world.

The Rich Young Ruler

All three Synoptic Gospels record the story of the young ruler who came to Jesus asking what he needed to do to inherit eternal life (cf. Matt. 19:16). To this the Master replied, "keep the commandments." The young man was not satisfied and inquired which one of the commandments the Lord meant.

The Lord's reply was direct, ... Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy Father and thy mother; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Matt. 19:18-19).

The young man said that he had done all these things since he was young, and then he pressed Jesus further, asking what he still needed to do. When Jesus told him to liquidate his possessions, to give the money to the poor, and then to follow him the man went away in sorrow. The reason for his sorrow lay in the "... great possessions" (Matt. 19:22) which were his.

We are tempted to view the man harshly, yet Mark tells us that "...*Jesus beholding him loved him...*" (Mark 10:21). Here was an exemplary young man. He knew the claims of the law. But the requirement that he first dispose of his possessions before he followed the Master was too much for him to bear because he had no spiritual foresight. He was like those who Peter says "... *are blind and cannot see afar off ...*" (2 Peter 1:9). The young ruler could not understand that the treasures of heaven outvalued his earthly wealth. He was blind to the fact that he did not love his neighbor as himself and that he coveted wealth.

How different this was from Paul's attitude:

"... I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. 3:8).

The world promises fame, fortune, and position. Do these allurements have a greater attraction to us than spiritual fellowship now and the promise of eternal life in Christ?

The joys of time, of little worth,
Should not confine our thoughts to earth.
Why grasp at transitory toys,
So near to heaven's eternal joys?

Darkness

Throughout the Scriptures darkness symbolizes ignorance or lack of understanding. Greed darkens the mind. So does prejudice, envy, jealousy, hate, and their related emotions. Notice how Paul treats all races and all civilizations in these words from the Epistle to the Romans.

Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened ... and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, *God gave* them over to a reprobate mind ... being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding ... (Rom. 1:21, 28-31).

Any one of these characteristics will render the human mind incapable of sound judgment. As Paul writes, we are all subject to some of them and in some degree, for *"There is none righteous, no, not one ... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Rom. 3:10, 23). What glory is it of which we fail? The glory of perfect man, made in the image and after the likeness of God.

This lack of judgment is recognized in the laborers found in another of Jesus' parables (Matt. 20:1-15). Those hired early in the day agreed to work for a stipulated amount. Others were hired during the same day. They too agreed with the householder as to their rate of pay for the day's labor. However, at the end of the day there was murmuring. When the employer distributed the day's earnings, those who had labored for the whole day were upset that the householder paid all of them the same amount. They thought him unfair.

His reply to their accusations was simple, Is your eye evil because I am good (Matt. 20:15)? Yes, jealousy, envy, and cupidity piqued their pride and distorted the kindness and generosity of the employer. They saw his goodness to others as unfairness to themselves -- which, of course, it was not, for he had paid them what they had agreed upon. It was their mind that was distorted.

Pharisaical Darkness

"... out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Earlier in this chapter (Mark 7:1-5) the Pharisees had established their traditions as the standard by which to measure the keeping of the law. Self-righteousness blinded their eyes to the good in Jesus' life. They could only see what they understood to be damnable in his life and teachings. The practical application of this lesson is learned in the parable of the beam and the splinter (Matt. 7:3-5). The beam that is in our eye is our own distorted judgment. Hence, had Jesus' critics regarded his life without their own prejudice they would have recognized the mission he had received from God. Looking, thus, with clear vision, they too could have given the same witness that we have from Nicodemus: *"...we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him"* (John 3:2).

We find in Luke's Gospel an explanation of how light is darkness.

The lamp of the body is the eye; when thine eye is clear, thy whole body is enlightened; but when it is dim, thy whole body is darkened. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness (Luke 11:34-35, Diaglott).

These words of Jesus are in answer to those who asked of him a sign. Jesus told them they would have no sign but that of Jonah, who was a sign to the Ninevites, just as he was to their generation (Luke 11:30).

In what darkness were the people to whom Jesus spoke? *"No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light"* (Luke 11:33). In their sight stood the true "light of the world" (John 8:12). Jesus' actions clearly demonstrated his claims. But their hatred of the light blinded them to his claims. John plainly speaks of this kind of hatred:

He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes (1 John 2:9-11).

John does not say that blindness has darkened such a person's eyes. No! Darkness has blinded his eyes. Hatred can so strongly possess our minds as to impair all judgment. So it was that Jesus' contemporaries saw both] the Master and his ministry in distortion.

What a sad commentary we have in the ninth chapter of John. Jesus had opened a blind man's eyes on the Sabbath (cf. John 9:1-7, 14). But, this wonderful miracle enraged the Pharisees. They sought the man out saying, "... *This man [Jesus] is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day ... How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles*" (John 9:16). The formerly blind man answered them simply, "... *Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see*" (John 9:25).

Jesus made himself known to this man when he heard that the Pharisees had cast him out of the synagogue. "... *For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind*" (John 9:38). Some of the Pharisees heard the Master say this and asked whether he referred to them. "*Jesus answered them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth*" (John 9:41). They professed to be enlightened and deliberately closed their eyes and ears to Jesus and his message because they did not want to accept it. Their understanding was darkened by their jealousy. They could not see because they would not see. Or, we might say that they saw, but the darkness of their hatred blinded their minds to the wonderful work of God that lay before them.

Another blindness is found when the Magi came to Herod inquiring how they might find the newborn king of the Jews. Herod gathered his advisers and asked them where the Messiah was to be born (Matt. 2:4). The Scribes and Pharisees knew the chapter and verse which foretold the exact details; but did they go with the Magi to Bethlehem? No! Their hypocrisy darkened their minds to the testimony that the Magi had brought to them. They did not care. Even Herod had more respect for the written word than the priests! Unfortunately, when this ray of light was cast upon Herod he deliberately set himself against the Word and attempted to frustrate the promise of God. What blindness can rule in the heart of a man: at one time both accepting the truth of the Word of God and yet assuming that the power of human reason could negate the Divine purposes therein outlined.

The Laodicean Church

We find that self-satisfaction characterized the church at Laodicea. They boasted of their wealth and prosperity, but their judgment was impaired and they did not see that God saw them as wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17).

Superior knowledge of the Bible or of God's word can lead to a pharisaical attitude. Some may question this statement, but if knowledge leads one to disparage the lesser knowledge of others, to look down upon them as being unenlightened, not in "the truth," or to exalt ourselves in our own minds, then there can be no doubt that the fruitage is the same as that reaped by the Pharisees of old. That is a pharisaical darkness which is identical to that which is meant by the phrase "the light in us being darkness."

We see another example in the picture of Christ standing at the door knocking for admittance to the church. Seemingly, this pictures a condition in which redemption by the precious blood of Jesus is so lost sight of that he is no longer the center around whom the church gathers. He is shut out of the assemblies. However, those who have anointed their eyes with salve (Rev. 3:18) recognize this condition. When they hear the knock they open the door of their hearts so that Christ may enter. Thus they are able to sup with him while others do not.

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:11-13).

The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body is also full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light (Luke 11:34-36).

- F.A. Essler

The Great Unselfishness

"And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth." John 17:19, RSV

Christ's great unselfishness and the power of his love impress and inspire the believer perhaps above everything else found in the sacred narrative of his life. Repeatedly, he gave evidence of his self renunciation and his love for men. I did not come to be served, he said, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28). Jesus did not utilize the closing hours of his life to bemoan the seeming misfortune and defeat that were so soon to overtake him. Instead, he spent them in compassionate consideration for his disciples and their welfare. In his prayer to the Father he affirms his harmony with the Divine will and his concern for those whom God had given him: "...for *their sakes I consecrate myself, that they themselves also may be consecrated in truth.*" Someone has called this "the most precious fragment of the past."

The Revised Standard Version uses "consecrate" instead of the word "sanctify" as found in the Authorized Version; and it probably conveys a better meaning because devotion to the will of God is prominent, rather than the holiness of personal character. Devotion to God's will is the primary thought suggested by the word; but of course it involves a blameless and spotless character. Through the twilight the Lord foresaw what awaited him -- the agony, the bloody sweat, the cross and passion, the anguish. The cross, with outstretched arms, waited to receive him; the midnight darkness to engulf him; the murderous band to wreak their hate on the unresisting Lamb -- and yet he flinched not, but went forward -- even yet consecrating himself.

'Twas thus he suffered, though a son,
Foreknowing, choosing, tasting all;
Until the dreadful work was done,
And drank the bitter cup of gall.

Christ's Concern

The Lord speaks of himself, his finished work, the glory which he had left, that to which he went, asking only that he might glorify the Father in every moment of his coming sorrow (John 17:1-5).

Then he pleads for those who had been given him (as distinguished from the world of men out of which they had come). Evidently the same thought was in his mind here as inspired his words when he spoke of the "sheep" (John 10) whom the Father had given him, that he might give to them eternal life (John 10:27-29). And it may be that both of these statements were inspired by the words which Zechariah had addressed to the poor of the "flock" when he cut asunder his two staves, Beauty and Bands (Zech. 11:7-14).

Underlying all three passages is one consistent thought. The Father entrusted to Jesus (with his special ability to keep them safe) certain individuals who have an affinity to his nature. These are to stand in Jesus' inner circle by God's arrangement. All lives are God's by right of creation and all are included in the redemptive work performed on the cross; but not all were included in the gift of which Jesus speaks, "*They were yours; you gave them to me ...*" (John 17:6, NIV).

What are the traits of those who belong to this group of "given ones?" Simply these: they have come to him (John 6:37); they hear his voice, listening for the slightest indication of his will (John 10:27); they follow his path through the world; they receive his words and believe that the Father sent the Son to be their Savior; the world, consequently, hates them (John 17:14).

Where these marks are present, they indicate the hand of the great shepherd and bishop of our lives; and though we be timid and worthless among his flock, he is pledged to keep us so that none shall snatch us from his hand. He will conduct us through the valley of shadows to those dewy upland lawns over which he will lead us for evermore.

Their Consecration

About what was the Master praying? He did not ask that his disciples be spared the pains and sorrow of this life; nor that their way be made easy -- free from trouble. He wanted his followers to live consecrated lives, that is, that they would be inspired by the same consuming passion that controlled him. He knew that he would be with them in the world no longer. The work given to him by God would now call him to the far country (Matt. 25:14), to which he would go to receive the kingdom and return. But he prayed that the passion which filled his soul, his tears and to some degree his sufferings, might remain among the sons of men, embodied in the lives of his followers and repeated through their lips. His human life was nearly over, he could not perpetuate a physical ministry among men. Therefore, he desired that those whom God had given him would illustrate his death until he returned (1 Cor. 11:26) -- not simply by gathering at his table but by living the same life he lived, and by filling up that which remained of his suffering (Col. 1:24).

With his dying breath, he pleaded that those whom the Father had given him would be consecrated. Think, therefore, how we should regard our life. If we are not consecrated, if we have reservations or are holding back a part of our affections or possessions, if we say that our lives still belong to us -- to use and dispose of as we desire -- then we are in direct conflict with the purpose and intent of Jesus' prayer. He asked that we might be consecrated; and some have chosen to regard consecration as the manifestation of crazed cultists.

How did the Savior secure the consecration of his servants? Was it not by the constraining power of his own example? "*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow*

his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). *"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"* (1 John 2:6). From early on it was Jesus' unselfishness and the simplicity of his prayers that had impressed the disciples. They longed to pray as he prayed and so asked that he teach them to pray as he did (Luke 11:1). The Teacher's example compelled the disciples. They had come under the attraction of his spirit. It caught them like a swift river's current, and they eagerly imitated him.

Consecrated by the Father

Is it possible for us to stare at the marks borne in Jesus' body as a result of the crucifixion without having our intellect branded by them? Can we see him hastening to the cross without being stirred to follow him? Can we read the Gospel accounts of his pursuit of the redemptive sacrifice for the world without being strengthened by his intensity? Is it possible to behold his plunge into the dark floods of death, so that he might emerge in the sunlit ocean, without consciously desiring to be like him: to drink of his cup; to be baptized with his baptism; to fall into the ground and die that he may not abide alone; to know the fellowship of his sufferings and conformity to his death, that he may appoint unto us a kingdom, as the father had appointed a kingdom unto him?

Consider Jesus' comment on this subject. The occasion came at the end of the Lord's public ministry. He had been standing in Solomon's porch, speaking to the Jews (John 10:23-38). He described how God had sanctified, consecrated, and sent him into the world. Have you ever wondered when this took place? Was it, perhaps, at the same moment in which Jesus first repeated the Psalmist's words:

Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine eyes hast thou opened: . burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come ... I delight to do thy will, O my God (Ps. 40: 6-8).

What a scene that must have been when, in the presence of the host of heaven, the Father solemnly set his son apart for the redemptive work, consecrating him to bring in everlasting salvation (Tit. 2:11), to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), and to bring together in one the children of God (John 11:52) that are scattered abroad (Acts 8:1)!

All Members Included

All the members were included in that solemn consecration of their Head. The king stood for his kingdom; the shepherd for his flock. Any who refuse to be consecrated subvert and contradict that momentous decision.

In the words of our theme text, Jesus renewed his consecration as he approached his death, and again he included those who belong to him. He bore us with him. He went to the cross; involving us by his action, he yielded himself up to death. In his purpose, we were quickened together with him and raised up together and made to sit down in heavenly places. By our confession that we are his, we are bound together with those who are committed to a life of consecration. We are pledged to it by union with our Lord. We cannot draw back from the figurative door post to which he, was nailed (Exod. 21:6) without proving that we do not appreciate the gift which he gave to the world, the surrender which withheld not his face from being spat upon or his soul from the shadow of death.

One final motive must surely have lain behind Jesus' prayer.', Jesus would one day share imperishable riches with those who would share his devotion. Would he not have prayed for them

that they might be fitted to bear the unspeakable mercy and grace which God has promised to those who would emulate their Lord? If Jesus thought and prayed so much for those whom the Father had given him, was it not because his real purpose lay deeper? Surely! Because it is only through Jesus Christ, and those who shall prove to be his joint-heirs, that the world will eventually come', to believe that the Father has sent him! Only with and through them will the world receive the results and the benefits of life and liberty in Christ. This was the real redemptive purpose. This was and is the central focus of the work which he came to do -- this is the focus of Jesus' great unselfishness.

The Beauty of Jesus in Me

My life touched yours for a very brief space,
And what, oh what did you see?
A hurried, a worried an anxious face?
Or the beauty of Jesus in me?

Was I steeped so deep in the ways of the world
That you couldn't detect one thing
That would set me apart and show that my heart
Belonged to the heavenly king?

Did I carry no banner for Jesus my Lord?
Not one thing at all that could show
Whose side I am on in the glorious fight?
I am his. But you wouldn't know.

Forgive me! and if we should e'er meet again
Upon earth, oh I pray you will see
No mark of this world, but his banner unfurled,
And the beauty of Jesus in me!

- A. H. Mortenson

Pentecost Type and Antitype

"Behold, I send forth the promise of my father upon you." Luke 24:49, ASV

Pentecost was an annual thanksgiving feast, held each spring at the completion of the grain harvest, fifty days after the Passover. Pentecost was one of three special annual Jewish festivals. At each of these every Jewish male was expected to present himself before the Lord.

The grain harvest lasted fifty days. It commenced with the offering of the first sheaf of grain on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:10, 11,15). It ended on the day of Pentecost, fifty days later, with the offering of two wave loaves from the new crop, as a first fruit unto God (Lev. 23:17). Both of these feasts were a part of the harvest.

The first month of the year was Nisan. On the fourteenth day of Nisan the Jews were to slay the Passover lamb. On the fifteenth day of the month the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. And on the following day, "... the morrow after the Sabbath..." (Lev. 23:11, ASV), the sixteenth day of the month, the harvest began.

The grain harvest of barley and wheat was the first fruit of the land -- every year. No specific offerings were required of the individual Jews on Pentecost, but each man brought a freewill offering from his harvest (Deut. 16:10). God had even made provision for the poor, for those who had no land to reap. These were permitted to glean the field and reap the corners of the land where grain had been left standing by the owners (Lev. 23:22). Both the rich and the poor shared in the bounty of the harvest.

Different Names for the Feast

Each of the phrases by which Pentecost was identified are significant.

"The feast of weeks" It is so called because the feast was related to the Passover. By God's command it had to take place just seven weeks after the sheaf waving ceremony of the sixteenth day of Nisan (Exod. 34:22; Deut. 16: 9,10).

"The feast of harvest" It was also a thanksgiving festival (Exod. 23:16) for the harvest of the new crop, accepted as a gift from God. Therefore, the whole nation, rich and poor, bond or free, joined together in one body and rejoiced before the Lord (Deut. 16:10,11).

"The day of the firstfruits" The first fruit of man, of beast, and of the land belonged to God. They were his peculiar treasure; being offered or consecrated to him (Num. 28:26). Pentecost was the day in which God claimed his portion of first fruit.

Blessings Illustrated

The harvest, ending on Pentecost, illustrated the harvest of spiritual firstfruits of the Gospel Age. Our Lord fulfilled the Jewish law and nailed it to his cross. But at his first advent he also introduced the fulfillments (or antitypes) of all that the Law foreshadowed. These remain with us today. The last members of the Body benefit as much by them as the first. This universality is a criteria which applies to all of the types of the law.

As an example, we cite the Sabbath. The Jews were commanded to stop their work and to rest, physically, every seventh day. The rest which our Lord gives to his church is a rest of mind and heart. This we enjoy every day. It is a rest of faith, faith in the fact that he is able to finish the work he has started within us (2 Tim. 1:12). Every child of God may enjoy this rest. It is a full rest, given to us when he died for us on the cross.

Those who ate the original Passover lamb benefited by its death. Likewise, those who eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man (John 6:56) also receive benefits. It is these benefits which we share at our communion (1 Cor. 10:16) and which we continue to share until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

The Pentecost type marked only the beginning and the end of the harvest. In between there followed normal human work. The same is true of the fulfillment or "antitype "

The presentation of the first sheaf of ripe barley to God, on Nisan sixteen, setting Jesus Christ forth as the firstfruits of them that slept, was a pledge and earnest of the two loaves presented on Pentecost. These loaves prefigured the church in its elective character as the firstfruits from among men. The second firstfruits speak prophetically of the full harvest to be gathered in the coming age, of which all God's holy prophets have spoken since the world began (Acts 3:19).

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Thereafter, he met with his disciples on several occasions. These meetings were held secretly, usually in the evening, early in the morning, at the sea shore, or on a lonely mountain. Prior to Pentecost, the nation had no inkling that Jesus had risen from the dead (Acts 10:40, 41). His last meeting with the disciples took place on the Mount of Olives. There he was seen to ascend up to heaven. Ten days later, God poured out the holy Spirit upon them. The day of Pentecost was fully come (Acts 2:1); the day of the feast of ingathering had arrived. Jews and proselytes from all parts of the world had been arriving in Jerusalem -- more than for any of the other two major festivals. How well God had chosen the time and place for the first public declaration of our Lord's resurrection and ascension. The rites of Pentecost were typical of the harvest of spiritual firstfruits offered to God as a result of Peter's teaching.

Pouring Out the Spirit

Those who had come up to the feast were gathered in one place. They heard a sound from heaven, as if it were a mighty wind. The noise filled the house where they had gathered, while cloven tongues like lambent flames were seen upon all heads. These signs furnished a double evidence of divine power. The spirit was given to qualify the disciples for their work as witnesses of Christ, as he had said, endowing them with power from on high (Luke 24:49). The spirit was to work within them, guiding them into all truth (John 16:13) by opening their minds to an understanding of the truths which up till then had been concealed. Spiritual discernment brought spiritual life, accompanied by those moral virtues and graces which Paul calls the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22).

These inward gifts remained to be proven by the future course of the disciples. External gifts were also manifest, as a public proof of their heavenly endowment. Like other miraculous gifts, they were designed in part for the use of the recipient but *even* more as a sign (to others) of their divine commission.

Peter's Great Message

The news spread. Multitudes flocked to the scene. They were confounded by the sound of these Galileans speaking in several languages. Some even attempted to discredit the disciples by suggesting that the men were drunk. Peter refuted this charge, pointing out that it was only nine o'clock in the morning -- too early for Eastern men to begin drinking. Peter declared that they had been filled with the holy Spirit. Under the influence of that Spirit he taught them that "... *this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel*" (Acts 1:20).

[Scholars tell us that the phrase "this is that which was spoken" is a form of introducing a quotation in which the sense of one or more passages is given, and not that the very words are used. When the exact words are being quoted, the more usual form "it is written" is employed, as for example, Acts 1:20. -- Editorial Committee]

Peter continues with his message. First, he charges the Jews with wickedness in the crucifixion of Jesus. But then he proceeds, declaring that Jesus had been raised from the dead and that his resurrection fulfilled David's prophecy of Christ, inferring from that prophecy the exaltation of Jesus to God's right hand. He points to the manifestation which they had just witnessed as proof positive of his interpretation. "... *God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*" (Acts 1:36).

Peter's appeal to their conscience must have been very striking indeed, for many of these had doubtless been present at the Passover celebration just seven weeks before. They could very likely have been present at the scenes of Jesus' accusation and crucifixion. Now they were gathered at Jerusalem again. They had had seven weeks to reflect upon what had taken place.

The sting of conviction pierced their hearts. They cried to Peter and the other apostles, "... *men and brethren, what shall we do*" (vs. 37)? Their cry was answered with the call to repentance. And their repentance was signified (confessed) by their baptism in the name of Christ that their sins might be remitted and that they might receive the holy Spirit. This offer of mercy was eagerly accepted by many.

Such was the first apostolic sermon. More was added, but all was concluded with the exhortation that the listeners should separate themselves from their perverse generation. All who received Peter's message, that is, all who had faith in the truth which Peter had told them, were baptized and added to the church.

The Pentecostal firstfruits thus offered to God were three thousand lives. This was not merely a passing excitement. The converts became faithful disciples. They lived by the teachings of the Apostles and maintained the fellowship of the church (Acts 2:42). The four elements included in this summary of daily life in the infant church deserve special notice.

Doctrine

What was the teaching of the Apostles? Was it not based upon their own testimony and witness regarding Jesus' life and death, especially his resurrection and ascension? Faith in these basic doctrines is essential to salvation. The apostles also pointed out that these truths were based upon the Old Testament -- on which all Jews firmly believed.

Fellowship

The word "fellowship" in this text is the same as that which is elsewhere translated "communion" (1 Cor. 10:16). It means a common sharing or common participating. Though most often used in connection with mental or spiritual things, in this instance it seems to refer to the material things of their lives. This was a practical application of the truth. The poor, who formed the body of disciples, were sustained by sharing in the wealth of the rest -- according to their necessities. This was just as it had been in the typical Pentecost celebration.

We are not implying that the early Christians adopted a form of communism. No one was forced to divest himself of individual property. None were required to place their possessions into a common fund. They did indeed have a common fund which was distributed among the poor by the apostles. However, those who fully practiced the principle that none "... *of the things which he possessed was his own*" (Acts 4:32), sold their lands and houses and voluntarily laid the receipts at the apostle's feet. This practice was not binding. This we see from the stress laid upon the self-sacrifice of Barnabas (Acts 4:36,37). On the opposite side, we see in Peter's statement about Ananias and Sapphira that they might have kept the land if they had chosen, or even that they might have used the money (Acts 5:1-4). Luke's language is universal, but universal statements are always interpreted by more specific information. What was universally accepted was the principle that none should want while any of the brethren had the means of helping them. In carrying out this principle, they used that Christian principle of benevolence, which is more effective than the forced equality of wealth.

Breaking of Bread'

The breaking of bread refers to the social custom which began with this community, of eating together daily. When we accept our daily food as a blessing from the Lord, it is good' for the Lord's people to eat together. This is an opportunity for prayer, supplication, and personal conversation about those events in our lives which relate to godliness. The first three times that our Lord revealed himself to his followers (after his resurrection) were associated with eating. Who can doubt that the Lord is near when his people eat together and talk about their hopes of the kingdom?

Prayer

This distinct mention of prayer vindicates its place as an act of common Christian worship. Some have inferred that all prayer must be done in private (cf. Matt. 6:6). This was not the practice of the early church. Paul prayed with the elders of Ephesus. Our Lord prayed in the presence of John when the holy Spirit came upon him. He was praying with the three disciples when the transfiguration occurred. Even his last words, as he hung upon the cross, were a prayer.

Ye Shall Receive Power

The Pentecostal movement affected even those who did not join it. The Pentecostal feeling was preserved by the apostle's miracles. The first practical fruit of the new faith is seen in the generosity of its adherents. The infant, pure church grew every day by the addition of new converts. They enjoyed the harmony to be found there. And they also enjoyed the favor with which they were received by even non-Christians, as they manifested some likeness to Christ at least until the beginning of their persecution.

Peter soon had another opportunity to teach about the Savior. The people had assembled for evening prayer at the temple. To them was brought a forty year old man, one who had been lame from birth. Peter and John healed this poor individual.

The Sadducees interrupted Peter's discourse, carrying the two off to prison. The pretext mattered little. Their real offense in the sight of the rulers was that they preached the resurrection from the dead in the name of Christ. But the arrest of Peter and John did not prevent their words from being received by at least five thousand.

The next morning, under Annas and Caiaphas, they were assembled before the Sanhedrin. Peter boldly taught that the miracle had been performed in the name of Jesus, who though crucified by them, had been raised by God. It was this one name which had been given under heaven for the salvation of men. The Apostle's free speech contrasted with their lack of education. The council was not left to wonder whether these men were worthy followers of Jesus. The bodily presence of the man who had been healed prevented any denial of the miracle. Much more importantly, the effect of the miracle upon the people prevented their dealing harshly with Peter and John. Instead, they threatened the two and released them.

The assembled church received them thankfully, this being the earliest example of united Christian prayer. And their prayer was answered by another sign of God's presence, the shaking of the place in which they met -- just as at Sinai in times gone by. They also received a fresh outpouring of the holy Spirit, enabling the apostles to continue their work with renewed zeal and power, and the church to receive, still more manifestly, divine grace and harmony.

The Lesson For Us

We dare not conclude this study without making some personal applications of these events. When the barley sheaf was waved before the priest it represented our Lord Jesus. The sheaf was composed of the finest ears they could find. So also, at the feast of Pentecost, the two wheat loaves were made of new flour from the finest of wheat. -- Or that should have been the case. Malachi reminds us that instead of coming to the Lord with their best, they were inclined to perform the letter of the law and to avoid the spirit. The people were willing to bring the sacrifices and offerings, but selfishness led them to offer the weak and the lame, keeping the best for themselves. Yet, the Lord urged them to test him, to prove him, and to see whether or not he would grant them great blessings if they would enter into the spirit of their consecration to him, if they would offer unto the Lord the best of what they possessed (Mal. 3:8-10).

Spiritual Israelites may profit from such rebukes to natural Israel. We have promised the Lord the best of our lives. To what extent have we rendered our sacrifices and offerings in harmony with our covenant? Our trials' will not last long by God's standards. But as long as we are on trial, God is determining whether we are worthy or unworthy of the glorious blessing of joint heirship with our Lord, which he has promised to those who will follow Jesus' example. The Lord required one tenth of all that natural Israel possessed. He makes no specific requirement of spiritual Israel. Instead, he leaves the amounts and the occasions of our sacrifice to the individual ability and heart. We are allowed to demonstrate to God just how much or how little we love him.

The Lord's words to natural Israel strike us even more forcibly: "... *prove me now herewith...*" (Mal. 3:10). What is it that the Lord says to those who feel that they are spiritually poor, or spiritually lean, or that they are not enjoying the fellowship with their Lord as they might desire? Does he not dare us to test him? "Bring ye the entire tithe into the storehouse. Fulfill your consecration. Prove me in this way, and see whether I will do my part. I will do more for you than all that you have asked or thought." Yes, those who accept the Lord's invitation heartily, without reservation, find their spiritual leanness remedied, their spiritual hunger filled, and their joy of heart increasing every day.

- J. C. Lange

Please Come in Proper Attire

Due to the current extremes in spiritual dress, we issue the following directive to prospective members of the body of Christ. Please read carefully and plan your wardrobe so as to spare yourself embarrassment at the forthcoming reception of the King of Kings.

Men: *The whole armor of God* (Eph. 6:13-18). It is perfectly in order to wear your spiritual armor at all times. Full combat dress will identify you immediately as a soldier of the king.

Ladies: *The robe of a meek and quiet spirit* (1 Pet. 3:4). We realize that this garment is expensive, but we urge you to invest in one. It will last a lifetime and will never go out of style. It will complement your high calling in Christ and take you into royal company with a gracious air.

Children: *The suit of obedience*, (Eph. 6:1). The garment designed especially for the youthful form. It may seem to be close fitting, but once you adjust to it you will find it protective as well as attractive.

All Christians: *The garment of praise* (Isa. 61:3). These are woven of gold and silver threads and provide a pleasant rustling sound as you move. They also catch gleams of heavenly light and reflect them back to the Creator.

If you are still wearing the black garments of bitterness, complaining, criticism, and hatred, please dispose of them immediately. They have been found to be injurious to spiritual health, as the dark dyes penetrate into the heart and cause spiritual cancer.

When in doubt, the all occasion *coat of love* is always acceptable. Floor length, it covers all deficiencies and flatters any personality.

Please note: Anyone wearing filthy rags of self righteousness will not be admitted.

- R. L. Bonnici

Doctrines More Or Less Important

Wise counsel from a faithful pastor

There are features of the doctrine of Christ which are fundamental and indispensable and without which none would be recognized of the Lord as one of his followers. There are other features which seem to be useful, helpful, blessed, but not fundamental -- not essential to membership in the body of Christ.

The fundamentals have been enjoyed by saintly ones from Pentecost until now. We have the same fundamentals, and are permitted to have other privileges, truth, "meat in due season," for our strengthening. These latter are not necessarily essential to our membership in the body of Christ; otherwise our forefathers who did not have them would not have been members of Christ and there would have been no Christ body for centuries.

The fundamental theory of the Atonement is as follows:
All men -- all of Adam's children -- are sinners.

None can be reconciled to God without a Redeemer's sacrifice. Jesus came into the world to be that sacrifice -- and later to apply that ransom price for the sins of the world.

On the basis of faith in the Redeemer's work, the believer may consecrate himself to the divine service in acceptance of the divine invitation, "... *Present your bodies a living sacrifice.*

So doing, the believer may, *up* to the time of the completion of the elect number, exercise full assurance of faith that his sacrifice will be accepted of the Father and that he will receive a share of the anointing of the Holy Spirit -- the begetting.

Such as meet these conditions are to be accepted as brethren in the highest sense of the term. This much would seem to have been always necessary, and more than this, we believe, is not necessary today.

But if by reason of our favorable day we have more knowledge, we may also have corresponding trials, which our greater knowledge will offset.

Our advice to the Lord's people is that they put no yoke upon each other, beyond the fundamentals above -- they stand free and leave each other free and fellowship and agree as much as they can with each other.

If there be a disposition to crowd each other on more than this basic faith and if it be considered necessary to separate so that both parties may grow, then rather than a continual contention a separation would be the wise course.

We are not criticizing the views of any. Each has a right to hold what he believes the Bible to teach. Our views are doubtless well known to our readers. Briefly, they are as follows:

The one that sinned was Adam, and he and his posterity were involved.

A Redeemer was necessary.

Jesus became that Redeemer, and "gave himself a ransom for all."

God has invited some of the redeemed sinners -- not to be the ransom price, nor to redeem anybody else, but -- to be associates of the Redeemer, members of his body, his bride.

The conditions upon which these have fellowship are that Jesus as the great advocate shall accept them as his members -- their flesh as his flesh -- and that he shall impute to them the share of his merit which would be coming to them as members of the Adamic race.

They are justified from the shortcomings, weaknesses, and imperfections inherited by them; and their own wills and all their remaining powers and talents being consecrated, their sacrifice may be acceptable to God -- as part of the sin-offering by the great high Priest.

Sharing in the Redeemer's death, these are privileged to share in his life, by the first resurrection,

The Redeemer does not now apply his merit to the world, aside from the newly accepted and added members. He will carry out the divine program, and sacrifice all his members before presenting, at the end of the age, the merit of his sacrifice on behalf of the sins of the whole world, and *will* thereby seal the New Covenant for them.

In our judgment, many err in attaching too much value to the church's sacrifice; whereas others, err, we think, in that they do not see any value in the church's sacrifice, nor that she is permitted a share in the Master's sacrificing at all. It seems like the swing of the pendulum from one extreme to the other; whereas our view lies in the center, as we have stated the matter in our several publications.

If after considering these matters, a class finds that it cannot agree and would better progress as two classes, we concur in that conclusion as wise, as much as we would deplore the necessity of a division. Such a separation would not necessarily alienate either class from the Lord's people because both acknowledge Jesus as their Redeemer, and both acknowledge that his blood is primarily efficacious.

- C.T. Russell

God Holds the Key

God holds the key of all unknown,
And I am glad.
If other hands should hold the key,
Or if he trusted it to me,
I might be sad.

I cannot read his future plan,
But this I know;
I have the smiling of his face
And all the refuge of his grace,
As on I go.

Enough; this covers all my wants
And so I rest;
For what I cannot, *he can see*,
And in his care I sure shall be
Forever blest.

Power for Service

"The God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God." - Psalm 68:35

Whatever our abilities, we are unfit for God's service until he consecrates our power to his service. Until we receive this divine power, his Spirit, we have no power for any spiritual work -- however small or humble. We seldom realize this weakness. Consequently, it is not our weakness which is our greatest hindrance. Our imagined strength inhibits our service to God. Every time we depend upon our wisdom, ability, intellect, or our power to argue and convince, we ignore a fundamental truth: "*.. our sufficiency is of God*" (2 Cor. 3:5).

When a ship has run aground, its own power is futile for moving it. Actually, rather than helping, its own power is apt to strain and damage the vessel. What then? The ship must await God's power: the power of the rising tide. This great force will easily accomplish what human engineering could not. This is a parable of human helplessness waiting for divine power. Our powers can be used by God, but only when we think nothing of them. When we surrender ourselves to the Divine power we can be used as God wills. Then we can be content to be despised, if by that despising he will be glorified.

Causes of Insufficiency

It may be said that our insufficiency is threefold. We are not still enough for God to come to us. We are not empty enough for God to fill us. We are not sanctified enough for God to use and honor us.

Two metaphors show this clearly. One of these likens the action of the holy Spirit upon us to the falling of the dew. The other likens the Christian to a clay pot made by the Lord, to be filled by the Lord, and used as the Lord may choose.

We need to be still in order for God to come to us. The influence of the holy Spirit falls upon our life as the dew falls in the stillness of the night upon the drooping plant. The plant cannot make the dew; it can only wait for it and attract it. The dew is always near, suspended in the atmosphere. But the dew does not fall unless two conditions prevail. The air must be still and the plant must be cool.

We need stillness in our heart if the grace of the Spirit is to revive us. The feverish heat of life must also abate for the blessed baptism, giving power from on high, to descend upon the still, cool heart.

Again, we need to be empty in order for God to fill us. Paul describes the idea of true Christian character as "*... a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work*" (2 Tim. 2:2 1). The metaphor tells of the dignity to which we are called -- to be honorable vessels. It tells us what our service is to be -- prepared for good works. But what it tells also deflates our pride and misplaced self-sufficiency -- we are only vessels. God formed us as it pleases him. He uses us as it pleases him. We have nothing. We are his vessels for receiving, carrying, and distributing that with which he fills us.

Not Always Emptied of Self

It often happens that we are not satisfied with being just this, and nothing more. We are not always emptied of self so that the Master may put into us what he wills. It is honorable to be vessels in his hand. It is a marvelous grace that we who were vessels of wrath (Rom. 9:22) can be transformed into vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:23), and then to make these into vessels of honor (2 Tim. 2:21) which will be fit for the noblest use -- to carry grace to other lives.

Do we realize that we are only vessels to be employed in different ways, some to more usefulness than others, some constantly in use, others only occasionally? All of them are empty vessels until he fills them, vessels to be used by him in any way that he thinks best, or to be laid aside upon the shelf if they are of no present use. Do we always agree to this? Are we sometimes willing to be used, but only if he makes us great enough to satisfy our ideas or only if he will fill us with some aromatic spice instead of mere water? Are we willing to be used in the meaner ways? To be used in ways which do not bring glory to ourselves?

We need to be holy enough for God to honor us. Honorable vessels are sanctified vessels -- purged from evil and dedicated to his service. This is the most essential characteristic. How can the Lord of purity use unclean vessels when he wants the vessel to carry the pure water of life (Rev. 22:17) to some thirsty soul, or the wine of the kingdom (Luke 22:18) to some fainting heart?

A Single Uncontrolled Desire

The measure of our Christian power is the measure of Christian dedication. A single desire which has not been put away (whether of the flesh or of the spirit), a single besetting sin which we tolerate to exist in our lives *will* hinder our usefulness to God, even though we are vessels of the finest craftsmanship and ornamentation.

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the refiner" (Prov. 25:4) is one of Solomon's sayings. Its spiritual application extends deep. Does it not mean, "Take away all conscious defilement from soul and life, and then, as hallowed vessels, God *will* be able to use you for his praise?" It was a law for ancient Israel that they should "... *bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord*" (Isa. 66:20). If the vessel was unclean, it was a vessel "... *wherein is no pleasure*" (Hos. 8:8), and the offering contained within would not be accepted. That law has never been removed from the statute book of Christ.

These are some of God's answers to our questions about our insufficiency in service. They both rebuke and stimulate us when we listen to them in the secret place -- for there only can they be heard. At such a time Saul of Tarsus was deep in self-condemnation and despair. He had been emptied of all self-sufficiency. Then the Lord said, through Ananias, "... *he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel*" (Acts 9:15). If we could only begin by emptying ourselves of self as did Paul, might we not end where he did too, "...*filled with the holy Spirit*" (Acts 13:9).

Our Reasonable Service

"I have showed you all things, how that so laboring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" - Acts 20:35

There is a time during which God has extended a call to joint heirship with Jesus. Those who respond and who enter into that Bride of Christ are privileged to enjoy more of the divine grace than any who have lived in some previous age. To such God addresses himself as their father. They are his children. To these he communicates a knowledge of his will and plan -- without specifying in detail the particular words and deeds he expects of them.

God places such under the perfect law of liberty, love -- the law which gives them liberty to do all that they please in harmony with love to God and man. He who loves much may give proportionately; he who loves little may give accordingly. Our Lord intends that each should demonstrate his own development. Shall such consider that this law of liberty releases them from all obligations? Shall such consider, in the light of the Master's silence on the subject of giving, that they are at liberty to give one twentieth or one fiftieth or one hundredth part or nothing to the Lord's cause?

The Lord's people do have just such liberty. He will not withhold the rain from us on this account. Nor will he send pests as punishment, as he did with the Jews under their covenant. Hence, nearly all who have been begotten by the Spirit would rather say that if the Israelites owed God one tenth of their income to benevolent purposes it is only proper that the spiritual seed of Abraham also offer thank offerings to God. The Jew, who had every advantage over the gentiles, gave one tenth of his income to holy things. How much more should we give, we who by God's grace have far greater advantages than they.

Spiritual Israel's Offerings

Those who accept God's special favor learn, through the Spirit, that to enter this relationship with the heavenly Father involves the complete surrender of themselves to his will. Since he who gives himself thus gives his life and his all, it follows that he has agreed to give to the Lord ten times as much as the Jew agreed to give in his covenant. The obligations, then, of the spiritual Israelite are greater and not less than the obligations of the natural nation of Israel. Our obligation should absorb not only all of our income and all of our profit on our capital and labor but also the capital: our lives.

The spiritual Israelite enjoys a greater liberty than the natural. God's expressed commands are far fewer. However, we find that in proportion as we possess the Spirit of the lord we will realize the depth of our obligation. This realization will lead us on to greater faithfulness and fullness of devotion. God did not enforce the obligation of tithing amongst the Jews. Similarly, he does not attempt to enforce the terms of our covenant of full sacrifice. He does, however, take note of our course in life. Our lives are the measure of our love and appreciation of his mercy and blessings. God watched over Israel. Those who were faithful in his commands he blessed in basket and in store. God watches over his spiritual people too. He gives not only temporal blessings, but more importantly, he gives spiritual bounties to those who are faithful in presenting their earthly lives and treasures as sweet smelling living sacrifices to him.

Solemn Warning

Are there some who fall after they have tasted of the gifts of God? Are some feeble and delicate in spiritual health? Are some ready to be stumbled by the Adversary? If so, these have been lax in rendering unto the Lord that which they have covenanted to give. If they have been energetic in his service and continue to stumble, it is because their energies and efforts were made to be seen of men and were not borne of devotion to the Lord.

It is important that we always turn such questions and criticism inward rather than outward. Let each ask himself how he measures up to such important principles. We do not always know who are the Lord's, but we may be assured that "... *The Lord knoweth them that are his...*" (2 Tim. 2:19). These shall not stumble -- though they may be permitted to pass through trials and reverses. To these the Lord will, with every temptation, present also a way of escape. He will succor them because they are his. "...*If ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*" (2 Pet. 1: 10,11).

Lest We Come Short

Let each look into his own heart. Let each judge himself whether he is rich in the Spirit of the Lord, whether his soul is fat, whether he is growing in grace -- as well as in knowledge. Those who can answer in the affirmative should rejoice -- cautiously. The Apostle warns us to rejoice with fear, lest our present condition of blessing and grace should give place. Clouds of earthly origin can easily arise which will hide the heavenly Father from the eye of faith. Those who find themselves answering in the negative, whose lives are spiritually lean instead of spiritually fat, should bear the apostles words in mind. "*Let us ...; fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem', to come short of it*" (Heb. 4:1).

None should be discouraged. Harken to the Lord's word to Israel. He told them,

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, ... and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the, windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3:10).

May all who desire to find such overflowing blessings take the Lord at his word, and present to him the offerings which we have already consecrated to him. They are not our own. First, because we were bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ. Secondly, because we have already consecrated ourselves to the Lord, surrendering all to him -- for eternity.

Labor Not For Perishable Meat

If we have been lax, let us put forth new effort. Remembering that the days are evil, let us redeem the time (Eph. 5:16) which remains to *us*. The world around us is unfavorable to our faith. The tendency of this world', is toward selfishness and a life away from God.

Those who are so revived will no longer find themselves interested and drawn to earthly things. They will find opportunities of honoring the Lord in their ordinary vocations. They will seek opportunities of ministering to others, especially fellow brethren in the narrow way. Successful steps taken in this direction will be the cause for more frequent trips to the throne of Grace. We will feel the need to lift our minds and our hearts in thankfulness for his help in all of our times of

need. Particularly, those who have given their lives to him should reflect upon the activities and the thoughts of the day, reporting to the Lord on their successes and failures. Such fellowship with our Father; such a comparing of our lives to his perfect standard will stimulate us in the heavenly race and renew our vows of consecration -- of surrendering our all to him and his use.

Given over so completely to his use, those who first seek the kingdom of God will find opportunities for meeting with others. Together they will encourage and uplift one another in that blessed faith and so much the more as they see the day drawing on.

Our Father's Faithfulness

"... I lay down my life ... No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself." - John 10:18

We have heard it expressed that our heavenly Father turned his face away from our Lord Jesus so that he died. Those who hold this idea also suggest that our Lord Jesus illustrates this dependence upon God's favor by his reference to the twenty-second Psalm while he hung on the cross (Mark 15:34, Matt. 27:48). However, a number of other scriptures oppose this view, as we shall show. Because of such contrary indications we suggest that Jesus' words, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* point to the whole psalm which not only conveyed his circumstance but also served him as a personal encouragement.

A Typical Illustration

First we consider our theme text, quoted in full: *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."* The word "power" is derived from *exousia* which means: "power of choice", "liberty of doing as one pleases"; "leave" or "permission" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon). Note Jesus' reference to himself as a voluntary sacrifice. In the levitical procedures for the Day of Atonement we find a direct illustration of Jesus' sacrifice of himself. *"And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house"* (Lev. 16:6). Aaron (who symbolically represents our Lord Jesus) offered a bullock for himself, just as Jesus offered his life in sacrifice.

Jesus said that no man, no one, took his life from him. Again, in the Levitical type, that Moses (who aptly illustrates the Creator) does not offer the sacrifice. The animal's death portrays the death of the Jesus -- so Aaron slew the bullock.

Our Lord Jesus was resurrected and appeared in heaven for us *"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands ... but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us..."* (Heb. 9:24). This is represented by the blood of that slain animal carried into the Most Holy by Aaron the high priest.

When our Lord Jesus was in Gethsemane and sorely needed divine encouragement and assurance, did God, the creator, the ever-faithful, turn away from him? He did not!

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him (Luke 22:41-43).

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared ... (Heb. 5:7).

This encouragement of our Lord Jesus reveals our heavenly Father's faithfulness to him. This is consistent with the way God dealt with Israel in the past. For example, the establishment of Joshua to succeed Moses is an evidence of God's historical care for his people.

God's faithfulness is not dependent upon the faithfulness of his people. Israel was not always faithful to God. *"Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain"* (Jer. 2:5)? The priests of Israel also forsook God,

"The priests said not, Where is the Lord? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit" (Jer. 2:8).

Likewise also the people (Jer. 2:9-11): *"For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water"* (Jer. 2:13).

Verse seventeen continues in this train of thought. Has not evil befallen you because you have forsaken me, the Lord your God? God then adds, Have you not traded the one true God for imitations? He then points to the inability of these false gods to save them in their distress (Jer. 2:28): *"But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah"* (Jer. 3:28). We see that our creator sets the pattern by showing his derision of gods who cannot help men in their troubles. In counterpoint, our Father is showing that he is the only god that can save men.

Would not even Jesus, on the morning of his crucifixion, have needed encouragement again? How apt are the words of the psalmist speaking prophetically of Messiah: *"I called upon the Lord in distress"* (Ps. 118:5). Yes, our Lord felt distress, even the distress of the cross. But what did God do? *"The Lord answered me and set me in a large place"* (Ps. 118:5).

The psalmist says again, *"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear..."* (Ps. 118:6). What comfort for our Savior, as he hung upon the cross is found in these prophetic words, *"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"* (Ps. 118:8). Had he not been forsaken by the Apostles, the scribes and the priests hated him, the people stood gaping and jeering?

"It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes" (Ps. 118:9). Both psalmist and Jesus knew that the support of God was superior to that of Satan and his host. All other sources of confidence are false princes indeed.

Behold, the confidence which the psalmist's words would have wrought in our redeemer as he said, *"The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death"* (Ps. 118:18; cf. Ps. 118:13-23). We return then to our original premise. Our Lord had the power to lay his life down. It is this power which Jesus exercises in dying as a willing sacrifice. How much alike is this submission to that of Isaiah when he recognized God's will for him and submitted himself to it saying: *"...Then said I, Here am I; send me"* (Isa. 6:8). When Jesus discerned God's will he also

responded *The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many*" (Matt. 20:28).

We turn again to the twenty-second psalm, suggesting that this psalm foreshadows our Lord's experiences on the cross and at his resurrection. In this experience our Lord calls directly upon God. Israel, however, turned away from the true, living, unforsaking God.

[Ps. 118:1-18 provide a prophetic description of Messiah's crucifixion]

But you, O Lord, be not far off;
O my Strength come quickly to help me.
Deliver my life from the sword,
My precious life from the power of the dogs.
Rescue me from the mouth of the lions;
Save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

[Ps. 118:19-21 describe our Master on the cross and his need for Divine assistance.]

I will declare your name to my brothers;
In the congregation I will praise you.

[as he had done for 3 1/2 years]

You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

[describing to whom Jesus would ultimately describe the glory of God.]

For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.
From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly;
before those who fear you will I fulfill my vows (Ps. 22:19-25, NIV).

Yes, our Lord Jesus prayed and God heard him.

Remember the lesson of the Good Samaritan. The passing priest and the Levite despised the wounded man, disdainingly to help him. The Samaritan would not forsake this fellow man. Who is the Great Samaritan? Is it not God who is the primary example of unmerited benevolence. The Divine encouragement offered to Jesus in his deepest time of need enabled him to fulfill his covenant by sacrifice. And God's faithfulness in ministering to his son proves the final testimony to the psalmist's words:

"For he has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help" (Ps. 118:24).

"From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly" (Ps. 118:25). Why? Because God had helped our Lord

Jesus through every step of his pre-human existence and through every step of his human life. When the horrors of the cross began to overwhelm him God encouraged him to finish, in death,

the sacrifice begun at Jordan. Thus our Lord fully uses the power to lay down; his life *"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power, to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."*

In the closing verses (Ps. 118:25-31) of the psalm we hear the praise which our Lord felt toward God. He had experienced the consolation which never leaves and which does not forsake -- though all men had abandoned him.; When we view the experience of Jesus and the prophetic words supplied by God through the psalmist in this light, we see strong objection to the suggested interpretation offered at the beginning of this article.

We have seen that God did not forsake his Son in his time of need. Moreover, to say that God had turned his face from our Lord is to undermine our faith and to suggest that God, with whom is no variableness (James 1:17) would also turn from us.

[This piece published anonymously at the request of its author, a new contributor to the HERALD - Ed. Comm.]

Tyranny

Tyranny appears in many forms. It is often displayed by enthusiastic, energetic people who see clearly what is best for their business, their community, or their family. The Apostle Paul confessed that in other days he had been a tyrant (see Acts 26:10-11). Would that all strong minded people, both men and women, had the honesty to admit the fact and could share his experience of defeating the enemy.

It is well meaning, clear minded, successful people who are most likely to be numbered among the tyrants - the "father knows best" type.

Consider the tyranny of the invalid. Many families carry the burden of caring for a relative suffering physical or mental disabilities. The normal family gladly shoulders the burden and pays the cost without grumbling; sometimes with cheerfulness. This is made easier if the invalid himself accepts what cannot be changed. But if he continually complains about his lot, makes demands for added attention when other members of the family have first claim -- this is to exercise the tyranny of the invalid.

There is the tyranny of grief. It is natural and proper to feel and to show grief when we lose someone dearly loved -- and none is immune to the experience -- but it is indecent to allow grief to dominate one's life and spoil the lives of others.

There is a cure for tyranny. It is to deny oneself the indulgence of grief, to become less self-centered, and to have concern for other people. This is the splint many gallant souls display. To know them is an inspiration. And more, it is a preparation for the time when we too must face the common enemy.

- from People's Paper, Australia

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