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Secret Prayer

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." - Psalm 91:1, RSV

Secret prayer has the sanction of some rather lofty scriptural characters. Isaac went out into the fields to meditate at eventide. Daniel knelt down upon his knees in his chamber three times a day in prayer and thanksgiving to God. Jesus witnessed the devotion of Nathaniel under the fig tree. Peter prayed on the housetop when he received his commission to preach the gospel to the gentiles. Jesus withdrew from the multitude and from the presence of the disciples, retiring to the mountains or desert to pray. How often did Olivet witness the devotions of the Man of Sorrows! The last rays of the setting sun fell upon Jesus as he knelt down to pray and with the first rays of dawn he was still there, his locks wet with the night dew.

Secret prayer is a test of sincerity. Public worship may be offered for many reasons: good or bad. But what can induce private devotions beside pure and lofty motives: the heaven inspired and heaven aspiring desire for righteousness, that is, the love of God! He who does not love God, or who does not desire to love him better, can have no business with him in private. Would any man seek interchange with another man except this were true? The hypocrite may pray in public or when surrounded by his family when he can be seen, but why would the hypocrite pray in private? And even if he attempts prayer he will soon abandon it, for he expects no pleasure or profit from an "idle" prayer.

There is hope for a man as long as he remembers his private devotion. He may have left his love and the things which remain may be ready to die. But the fact that he continues to feel after God in secret places if happily he might find God is evidence of both his sincerity and that the spirit of divine grace abides with him. It is this which attracts him to the fountain of life.

The "closet" removes all the external restraints to devotion. The sentiments of public service are suited to the general sympathy. This measure of emotion is not exceeded except in cases of overwhelming power and overflowing feeling, when the impetuous tide breaks through all restraints. But there are no restraints in the privacy of our own closet. There, no feeling need be

suppressed. The tear may flow. The passion of penitence may be indulged and the agony of prayer may be exercised. There no one can be annoyed and none can pass judgment. No one can ascribe your feelings to weakness or hypocrisy. In that lonely place there is no ear but God's to hear. Are there any confessions which no ear should hear but his? In that place there are no other eyes but God's to see. Who but God could understand your secret sorrows? He is thy father-thy Father in heaven. "Cast all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). And this is the promise of Jesus: "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." (John 6:37).

The closet is a favorable place for devotion. It not only removes hindrances but it also furnishes helps. It shuts out the visible. Leaving aside the dusty crowded ways of this world we are free to turn aside and rest a little in the sweet shade of the tree of life-to drink of the spring that gushes from the rock-to commune with God and think of heaven. There the world is absent. Pride is absent. Passion is absent. Eternity is present. God is present. Jesus is present. The angels are present. And the holy Spirit of God is present to carry away with us. We feel as Jacob felt as he lay down to sleep in the rocky knoll and woke in the midst of hovering angels. ".. And he said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:16,17).

Secret prayer prepares one for public service. The Christian comes forth from his closet refreshed with grace, filled with the spirit, with his face shining like that of Moses when he descended from the mount of communion. The Christian comes forth active to labor, patient to suffer, ready to serve his generation, and prepared to finish his course with joy.

"The Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:4). His blessing shall rest manifestly upon you. It will appear in your experience and in the daily walks of life. It will manifest itself to you and to others. The spirit of Jesus will be with you and in you. It will appear in your voice, in your looks, and in all your conversation. God will give you the necks of your enemies-the world, the flesh, and the devil. You shall run and not grow weary, walk and not faint, and mount up with wings like an eagle (Isa. 40:31).

- Selected

Good Tidings to Some People?

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests"
- Luke 2:13,NIV.

Every year at this time we publish an article treating the subject of our Lord's birth and "Christmas." Every year during early January we receive letters by readers who question why we do so. This year we thought to address that question as our Christmas message.

Most of our regular readers believe that December 25th is an inappropriate time to mark the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. A close reading of scriptural events suggests that December might more appropriately mark the begetting in Mary's womb of the infant, but that it is unlikely that it was the time of his birth. Detailed discussions of this belief have been previously published in the HERALD. The question is aptly put, therefore: If one does not hold that this is the time for the Lord's birth to be celebrated why discuss the subject now?

We are reminded by the New Testament (which is silent on the subject of celebrating or memorializing this occasion) that some things not matters of scriptural command. Many of today's celebrations occur as the results of a desire within the human breast whether for good or for bad.

To the believer in Christ (those who recognize that the Law was nailed to the Master's cross and that a new law of liberty in Christ has been ushered in) there is nothing inherently impure or inherently unlawful except as it strikes the spirit enlightened conscience which has been purged of sin. Believers are free to exercise their conscience. But, lest we be misunderstood, we do not condone relative morality: but rather that extremely rigid sense of morality recognized by those who have been cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ Jesus.

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. 6:12).

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not (1 Cor. 10:23).

Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled (Tit. 1:15).

It is recognized, and can be proven by research at any public library, that many of the symbols and rites of the Christmas season are derived from heathen beliefs. These, surely, are not things for Christians to uphold. Then why uphold the celebration of Christmas?

We are reminded of how our Lord and Savior did at times strongly rebuke some of his contemporaries for the errors they promulgated. We notice, however, that almost universally, these strong rebukes (like the "woes" of the eleventh chapter of Luke's Gospel) were reserved for the spiritual leaders of his day: those who taught others how they should behave. Similarly, his instructions to the people were nearly universally encouraging, upbuilding, and edifying. (one of the most notable exceptions to this is found in the sixth chapter of John, in which the Master deliberately discourages people from following him.) If we would follow the Master's example, then, we would do well to aim our criticisms at those who were in a position to instruct others and

to encourage others through the use of such homely illustrations as the spirit of God brings to mind.

This attitude alone does not summarize the Lord's dealings with the teachers of his day. He did not, generally, criticize the error in their celebrations; rather he most frequently criticized their hypocrisy in not upholding the good they understood the Scriptures to teach-and which requirements they actively demanded of others. Similarly, then, upholding this season of celebration and of good feeling towards others is one way of encouraging men (through their commonest of social occasions) to emulate something of the divine character in their attitudes towards their fellow men.

Look beyond these simple principles matters of greater importance. It is written:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:9-14).

We live in a day in which there is greater opportunity to communicate than ever before and yet people seem to possess less experiential knowledge about God and our Lord than in any previous time. Man is bombarded by work and pressures so that their leisure is commonly filled by doing nothing at all. Reading, for pleasure or knowledge, is declining, while television and video (the effortless means *of absorbing* what is transpiring around them) are becoming the largest source for information about what is occurring in the world.

At Christmas time, the majority *of* those who have any concept *of* a creative God at all turn to him at least in outward recognition *of* his existence. At this time of the year more than any other men are willing to take a moment here or there to learn somewhat about their Creator and his plan for them. And so, to the believer who wishes to share his love and knowledge about God with others, this is one of the greatest opportunities to share the gospel: "*unto us a child is born, unto us a son us given and the government shall be upon his shoulders -- and he shall be called, wonderful, counselor -- the prince of peace.*"

What Other Reasons Are There?

Put aside your worries about commercialism and that human greed which is so evident in this season. Think instead about that which *is* good and pure in the human heart which gives spur to such scenes *of* generosity and kindness as this season witnesses. Certainly, those negative things are not to be desired. But realize how these lessons of giving to others prepare, *if* only the tiniest corner *of* the human heart, for the lessons *of* selfless love which the kingdom *of* Christ Jesus is to teach all men. As poorly as men have comprehended the breadth *of* the herald Angel's message they benefited greatly by the little that they have learned.

Put aside theories that this season is the result *of* advertisers' *plots* to line their pockets with money. Consider instead the spontaneous outpouring *of* doing good to one's children, mate, friends which first taught the advertisers that this noble emotion was something they could misuse

to their benefit. The message *of* joy has so permeated the heart of the world that even in their imperfect condition great good comes of it.

Put aside the fact that many overspend themselves financially and emotionally during this season, causing mental and physical anguish for months to come as they attempt to repay debts that they have willingly assumed. Consider instead the subtle lessons they are learning about the **cost** of generosity-and ultimately the generosity of God towards man.

Discount the fact that many brows will furrow as they try in vain to balance bank accounts because they were too generous with their resources. Instead, consider him whose resources are unlimited, but who gave the dearest thing in the universe to him: the life of his only begotten son in redeeming a race lost in sin. Have you felt the shame of having a bill collector hound you? God acknowledged the "debt," incurred by a plan which he had set in motion and he paid -- through the agreeable and voluntary sacrifice *of* his son-the full price even **before** this greatest *of* debts was incurred. Jesus was the Lamb of God slain from **before** the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

Lift Your Mind to the Heavens

Forget for the time that many worship a god that they do not know. Remember that others worship intelligently, according to the oracles *of* God, and consider the fulness *of* joy which such worship brings to the divine heart. "*I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth*" (Luke 15:7).

When we peer below the surface of human holidays (Christmas or otherwise) are they not opportunities for those who accept the message of salvation in Christ Jesus to encourage others towards a life of righteousness and godliness to which all men must ultimately come? Such messages of moral reform may not work specifically towards the completion of the body of Christ, with which work Christians today seem preoccupied. But neither are we to be slothful at times when our zeal for that specific activity can find no outlet. Consider incidents *of* our Master's earthly ministry in which he taught by the manner *of* his life and his generosity towards others lessons which were not related to the nurturing of the Apostles or disciples. These were seeds sown for the kingdom, they were ideas which the common Jew of his day remembered long after the Master's words had been forgotten.

As we enter the Christmas season, let your light shine as an example *of* his life so that others may see him. Use the readiness *of* mind that one here and there displays to minister to them the words of salvation. Encourage others to acts of righteousness, though they may be but imperfectly accomplished. Share in God's joy when you see some of the wonders which a little kindness and love can work in the hearts of man. And, as is the case in truly gracious hearts, never allow others to see how costly those "little" acts of grace truly were.

-P J. Pazucha

The Question Box

Should a person attend Bible studies and worship services if they are boring, upsetting, or unproductive?

Not if the person that feels that way is the cause for Bible studies or worship services being boring, upsetting or unproductive. Let each of us first compare himself to Philippians 4:8. Then ask:

Are they boring because I already know these things?

Then, how may I selflessly help others to learn?

Is it because nobody knows how to lead a good meeting? That is rooted in pride.

Is it because they do not discuss the scriptural topics interesting to me? That is selfishness.

Is it upsetting because they will not do the things the Lord's way (--which I equate to my way)? Or, have I too little faith that the Lord can in his own time show others a better way? Then, I need to change.

Is it unproductive because other subjects are replacing the Bible? Then how can I, tactfully and humbly, suggest that our Lord and his Word be restored as the center of attention?

If we first do all these things for a while to the extent of our ability and the problem persists, then let us consider: If serious sins cause me upset, then *"Come out of [Babylon], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins"* (Rev. 18:4). If there are no serious sins, then continue meeting until you find other ways to not forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together"* (Heb. 10:24-25).

- Jim Parkinson

Not necessarily! You might want to associate with other Christians. There is no group of Christians which have all that God has to offer to his children and another may be more beneficial to you in your circumstances. However, there may well be room for our own improvement, and going to another group merely circumvents personal growth. The attitude, disposition, and weaknesses we manifest in the first group will be taken to the second. Soon we will see the problems we thought we fled from. We suggest beginning this way:

Pray for improvement and help for those in authority in the church everyday.

Pray for God to reveal to ourself our weaknesses in this and in other areas of our life everyday.

Thank God for the weaknesses of others that by association with them we may learn the love God and Christ have for sinners.

Pray for our improved understanding of God's word and read the scriptures daily.

Pray for opportunities to contribute to the well being and improvement of the Ecclesia, both in worship and in other functions.

Pray for wisdom and strength to establish the humble as Ecclesia servants and not the pompous or self seeking.

Then invest time, talent and resources in the work of God! The best blessings come to those who give, the lesser blessings to those who receive!

- B. Kuehmichel

Called To Suffering

We who follow the Crucified are not here to make a pleasant thing of life; we are called to suffering for the sake of a suffering, sinful world. The Lord forgive us our shameful evasions, and hesitations. His brow was crowned with thorns; do we seek rosebuds for our crowning? His hands were pierced with nails; are our hands ringed with jewels? His feet were bare and bound; do our feet walk delicately? What do we know of travail? of being scorned? God forgive us our love of ease. God forgive us that so often we turn our faces from a life that is even remotely like his. Forgive us that we all but worship comfort, the delight of the presence of loved ones, possessions, treasure on earth. Far, far from our prayers too often is any thought of prayer for a love which will lead *us* to surrender one whom we love to *follow* our Lord to Gethsemane, to Calvary- perhaps because we have never been there ourselves.

Lord, we kneel beside thee now, with hands folded between thy hands as a child's are folded in its mother's. We would follow the words of thy prayer, dimly understanding their meaning, but wanting to understand... *"That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them"* (John 17:26).

- A. Carmichael

Why Does GOD Permit EVIL?

Calamities -- Earthquakes -- Floods -- Cyclones -- Sorrow -- Suffering -- Death

"If a man die, shall he live again?" - Psa. 102:19,20

"For He hath looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death" - Job. 14:14

The history of the human family presents a dark picture of sorrow suffering, and death. Through famine, plague, storms, accidents, our race has drunk deeply of the cup of anguish. What is the Divine program concerning man's suffering? Why does God permit evil? What is the remedy?

The age-old question has been, Why has an all-powerful, all-wise Creator permitted pain and suffering? Why has he permitted the continuing reign of sin and death for more than sixty centuries?

Perhaps no difficulty has presented itself more frequently to the inquiring mind than this. Despite attempts to turn it aside, the question intrudes itself. Could not God have prevented man's fall? Why does he not deal with the human family as graciously, kindly, lovingly, as he deals with his angelic sons? Is it just or loving for God to bring forth millions of his creatures under these admittedly unfavorable conditions: beset by weaknesses and a tendency toward sin from their birth and surrounded by others similarly weak and helpless?

The failure of human philosophers to answer our question demonstrates that it is far too deep for human philosophy. Those who reject the divine origin of the Bible may just as well abandon hope of finding an answer. Only God can explain his own secrets-why he has done as he has. Truly we read, *"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant"* (Psa. 25:14).

The difficulty in understanding, then, arises from a failure to recognize God's plan in this world. He could have prevented sin's entrance. The fact that he did not should prove to us that its permission is designed for some ultimate greater good.

God's plans, seen in their completeness, will prove the wisdom of the course pursued. The Bible shows us that the God's purpose for men is progressive, embracing long periods of time. If we ignore these periods, when they can be seen in their completeness, we are blinded to the true answer to our question. Accepting these, Bible students may look at the subject from the Divine standpoint and may understand the mystery of God. This mystery has been hidden from ages and generations and has now been made known unto his saints (Col. 1:26,27). What is this mystery? Simply stated, God's plan will glorify him in its enlightenment of angels and mankind. In the ages to come trials and reverses, sorrows and tears will be proven to have been a worthwhile part of that program.

Man, A Convict

To understand our subject we must return to the beginning of earth's troubles. The sacred record explains that man's fall from life and the perfection in which he was created had been foreseen by the Creator. Therefore, the penalty of sin, death (Gen. 2:17), was arranged so as to be gradually inflicted. This happens through man's conflict with the unfavorable conditions of the unprepared earth (of climate, sterility of soil, storms, thorns, weeds).

God foresaw that, through our experiences, such a death penalty would furnish man a necessary lesson about sin and its results. That lesson, thus learned, would never need to be repeated. It would be an everlasting lesson to all; especially when Christ's reign of righteousness shall show, by contrast, the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Our experiences teach us that God designs our struggles upon this earth to be beneficial: our minds are exercised by grappling with earth's disturbances and imperfections, our conscience is exercised by combating our weaknesses, and our harmony with God is enhanced as we learn to call upon God's sympathy.

"For Thy Sake"

There is deep meaning in the Creator's words to his fairly tried and justly condemned creatures. He sent them out among the thorns and briar's, to labor in pain, sorrow, and disease, as well as to be subjected to the casualties and calamities of nature's unfinished work. He said,

"...cursed is the ground for thy sake..." (Gen. 3:17, author's emphasis); that is, the earth is in its present condition for our profit and experience, even though we may not recognize this fact.

The condemned pair had children. These children inherited the curse (imperfections and weaknesses as well as the ultimate penalty for these, death) from their parents; for "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean" (Job 14:4)? Mankind has been learning what sin and evil are (and their undesirable results) and he has been preparing the earth for the further purpose of God.

Labor and toil were prescribed for man's good. Until this century they have kept man so busy that he has been unable to plan or consummate evil to the extent he otherwise could have done. With man's increased ability to produce food and goods, we have seen the proliferation of evil; with leisure man has turned his attention to plotting and scheming. He has grown wise in pursuing evil. Under these circumstances, what a mercy our short lifespan is! Were the same "shrewd businessmen" who now accumulate millions in a few short years to live 930 years (as Adam did), what might we expect? One man, or at most a syndicate or trust, could conceivably own every foot of land, control every drop of water and every breath of air, and have the remainder of mankind for their slaves?

World Redemption Coming

It is clear that God's action in exposing his creatures to death, pain, and calamities, relates only to their present life on earth. He did not give the slightest intimation of any continuance of life, in any other locality. On the contrary, the penalty was "... for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Gen. 3:19) "...dying shalt thou die..." (Gen. 2:17, margin).

True, God promised that at some time a son of the woman would accomplish a deliverance (Gen. 3:15). But it was an indefinite glimmer of hope. Yet, God showed that although he dealt severely

with men, according to laws and justice, he was also sympathetic. He would relieve man without violating his own character.

Humanity was created with the moral sense of right and wrong and the liberty to use it. The law of right and wrong was written in his constitution. It was a part of our nature, just as it is a part of the Divine nature. But, this image or likeness to God, this law originally inscribed in the nature of man, has lost much of its clarity through the erasing, degrading influence of sin. Thus it is not what it was in the first man.

The ability to love implies the 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 is termed free moral agency, or free will, and is a part of man's original endowment; and this, together with the full measure of his mental and moral faculties, are what made him an "image" of his Creator. After six thousand years of degradation, so much of the original likeness has been corrupted by sin that we are not free. We are bound by sin's results. Sin is easier and more agreeable to the fallen race than is righteousness.

St. Paul tells us that God permitted the entrance of sin and death for man's training and education. God adopted a method for recovering our race from that original sentence of death which would show the justice of his sentence and the unchangeableness of his decree. However, it would also permit those who were sick of sin to use their experience to return to harmony and obedience to their Creator and his just and reasonable laws and regulations. This plan, is stated by the Apostle in Romans chapter three (Rom. 3:24-26). Briefly, this plan provided that another man (by proving his obedience to the law of God and hence his worthiness of eternal life) might sacrifice his life and redeem the forfeited life of Adam (and of his lost posterity); it is written "... in Adam all die..." (1 Cor. 15:22), and "It follows then that ... the result of a single transgression is a condemnation which extends to the whole race" (Rom. 5:18, Moffatt).

Since condemnation was upon all and since another newly created man would have been equally likely to fall, God planned the transfer of his only Son from the spiritual to the human nature. God thus provided a man fit for sacrifice-"...the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all" (1 Tim 2:5,6). For our sakes, he who had been rich (possessing glory, honor, wisdom and power) became poor (humbling himself to a lower nature-that of a man-becoming faithful unto death) so that we through his poverty might be made rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

The Redeemer's Sacrifice

To redeem man would cost the sacrifice of the Son's life as the ransom price (with the implied suffering and self-denial). To restore this life (to those who would prove worthy -- "whosoever will" as stated in Rev. 22:17) would require a double exercise of God's power: first to open the prison house of death by a resurrection of the dead and second, to give to the redeemed a full opportunity to decide whether they love good or evil, righteousness or sin, truth or error. He will destroy all who love and work iniquity. He will develop and perfect all who love and choose life upon its only condition -- righteousness.

Our Lord's mission at the First Advent is stated by the Apostle. Jesus was to die for the race so that he might undo the results of Adam's transgression and secure the right to resurrect them and restore them (cf. Rom. 5:6-12, 16-19, 21; 1 Cor. 21-24). He "wills" to restore all who shall prove worthy. This period of proving who are worthy of everlasting life is his Millennial Reign (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Christ will establish righteousness in the earth through the kingdom of God. It is this kingdom which he has promised which shall be inaugurated and for which he has bidden us

wait and hope. He taught us to pray, "*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven*" (Matt. 6:10).

The World's Glorious Hope

Paul states that the first man (who was a sample of what the race will be when perfect) was of the earth, earthy. In the resurrection his restored posterity (with the exception of the Gospel Church) will still be earthy, human, adapted to the earth (1 Cor. 15:38,44). David declares that man was made a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory, honor, dominion (Psa. 8:4-8). St. Peter, our Lord, and all the prophets since the world began declare that the human race is to be restored to that glorious perfection. Once again man is to have dominion over earth (Acts 3:19-21).

This is what God has elected to give to the race. And what a glorious portion! Close your eyes to the scenes of misery and woe, degradation and sorrow that prevail on account of sin, and picture the glory of the perfect earth. Not a stain of sin mars the harmony and peace of a perfect society; not a bitter thought nor an unkind look or word; love meets a kindred response in every heart and benevolence marks every act. There sickness shall be no more: not an ache nor a pain, nor any evidence of decay-not even the fear of such things. Think of all the pictures of comparative health and beauty of human form and feature that you have ever seen and know that perfect humanity will be of still surpassing loveliness. The inward purity and mental and moral perfection will stamp and glorify every radiant countenance. Such will earth's society be; and weeping bereaved ones will have their tears wiped away when they realize the resurrection work completed (Rev. 21:4).

Under the rulership of Christ as king of all nations, the evil tendencies inherited from Adam and those which have come from six thousand years of degradation will be restrained by superhuman wisdom, love, and power. And with all men being brought to a clear knowledge of the truth in its every phase, all will be fairly and fully tested. Lovers of righteousness will be perfected and given control of a then perfect earth. Those who love unrighteousness under the clear light of knowledge will be destroyed in the "Second Death" (Rev. 20:6) as followers of Satan. The first death is the destruction to which all were subjected by Adam's sin, the death from which all will be recovered by the Lord Jesus' sacrifice. The second death is the destruction of those who, though redeemed by Christ from the first death, shall by their willful conduct, merit and receive the penalty of death again. This second death means final destruction, without hope of redemption or resurrection, for Christ dieth no more. No good reason for any further trial can be imagined, for the trial granted during the Millennial Age under Christ as judge will be thorough, fair, and a final individual trial (1 Cor. 15:25).

Our Lord Jesus pointed out that death was the just penalty against all who do not flee sin and lay hold upon the Redeemer and life-giver (Luke 13:1-5). Destruction (perishing), is the penalty of sin taught in the Scriptures. Only by faith in the Redeemer, repentance, and reformation can the gift of God (eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord) be obtained. Whoever hears the offer of life is responsible *to the extent* that he understands it. According to God's promise and plan all mankind shall, either during the Gospel Age or the Millennial Age, be brought to a clear appreciation of these conditions and privileges, with full opportunity for repentance and life.

Mankind Learning the Lesson

Now calamities are temporary. They are the results of human imperfection and lack of experience. Or they result from the preparation of the earth for its Sabbath (or Millennium). During that thousand years (or "millennium"), under Christ's direction, earth shall be given its finishing touches and be made ready for the redeemed race. His reign shall prepare the people to properly use, enjoy, and rule the completed earth.

Man is exposed to these calamities and accidents. He is not specially protected by his Creator. Man is a sinner condemned to death, he is not to be spared from death, but must be allowed to pass through it. By the present experiences with trouble and sorrow and pain, all of which are but elements of death, mankind is laying up experiences with sin which will be valuable in that Millennium. Each person shall then be required to choose between good and evil. The evil they learn now; the good, and its blessed results and rewards will be fully displayed then-during the Millennium. Only a few profit by their lessons in the present life and these are chiefly those called to the heavenly calling. The majority of humans are only learning to know sin and evil. Even God's plan for the future of mankind is obscured from the masses. "...the *God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*" (2 Cor. 4:4).

With the dawning of the age of Messiah's kingdom, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God's character will shine everywhere. "*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped*" (Isa. 35:5). Messiah's gracious reign, the manifestation of Divine mercy, will be for the uplifting of our race. During the thousand years of Messiah's kingdom, the world will learn the desirability of righteousness, just as they now have the opportunity of learning the undesirability of sin.

But, if God's plan for redeeming the world was by the death of his son (justifying and restoring all who believe in and accept him, obeying and loving righteousness), why did not the millennial reign of Christ with its favorable conditions and powerful restraints begin as soon as Christ had given the ransom price at Calvary?

Why are those who would follow righteousness compelled to "sail through bloody seas," as the poet said, and suffer for righteousness sake? The answer is that God has been calling and drawing a special class of humans. They are to be his "elect," the "bride" class that are to be joint heirs with his son in the kingdom of glory. Christ and his bride will vanquish sin and Satan.

The Dark and Narrow Path

This special class is required to walk by faith and not by sight. They walk in the footsteps of Jesus: a narrow way (Matt. 7:14) of self-denial and opposition to the world, the flesh, and the Adversary. It seemed wise to our heavenly Father that our Lord Jesus should learn obedience through sufferings and be tested in respect to his willingness to endure suffering for righteousness sake. How appropriate it is that the same Father should make similar arrangements for the Church, whom he will receive from among the race of Adam to be members of the Royal Priesthood under Jesus, the High Priest of our order! So, God is preparing a Royal Priesthood for the messianic age. A priesthood that is to heal, to teach, to uplift all the willing and obedient.

During this Gospel Age sin and evil has been further made use of for the discipline and preparation of the Church. Had sin not been permitted, the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus and of his Church, the reward of which is the divine nature, would have been impossible. The Revelator

exclaims: *"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? ... all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest"* (Rev. 15:4).

Eventually, every creature in heaven and earth and under the earth shall be heard to say, *"...Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"* (Rev. 5:13). This will be the result of the reign of evil, sin, and death. The key is found in the Plan of the Ages-showing the work which each age is to accomplish and the grand eventual overthrow of evil.

Why Does God Permit Evil?

The preceding article is available in booklet form for free distribution. It is printed in an 8 1/2" x 5 1/2" format and the rear cover is blank making it suitable for use as a self-mailer. Share your hope and an answer to a perplexing problem with those who have no hope.

The Ideal Christian Or, the Christian Living With Others

"As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." - Luke 6:31

The Apostle Paul was a wonderful logician and his writings set forth the doctrinal elements of Christian faith in greater detail than any other of the apostles. We note that he pursues a specific purpose in his addresses to the church, however, and that he is not merely talking to hear himself speak. His points are not designed to display his wisdom nor to demonstrate his ability as a thinker. In every instance the writings of Paul lead the reader towards a Christ-like character, and this is nowhere more evident than in the epistle to the Romans.

He begins by distinguishing between the Jews and the gentiles. The Jews, he points out, had to some extent been informed about God, his will, and his plan. They contrast with the gentiles who were without God (cf. 1 Cor. 5:13) and who had no hope. He points out how degradation had occurred and how the knowledge of God had first reached Israel because of their election by God -- his grace -- not because the Israelites were better than others.

He shows that the law had not made the Jews perfect (Heb. 7:19) but that it was an instructor by which those under the law were to be brought to an appreciation of Christ the great Teacher--so that they might receive instruction from him. Israel had sought God's favor. But Paul points out that they failed to comprehend the most important lesson they were offered, because they were insufficiently candid with themselves. As a result they mistook the purpose of the Mosaic Law. Hypocritically, they claimed that they kept the Law inviolate and were entitled to the blessings promised: eternal life. They should have admitted that the Law was so perfect that they were unable to keep it. They should have called upon God for help. Had they mastered this lesson they would have been prepared to receive eternal life as a gift through Jesus Christ our Lord at his advent, and they would have given up their search for self-righteousness. The Apostle summarizes his argument with the point that Israel failed because they refused the blessings offered by God for faith. Thus *"Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded"* (Rom. 11:7).

It took the Apostle eleven chapters of logic to reach the point of his message: *"I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God [presented in previous chapters] that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."* He addresses the elect body of Christ, of which some were Jews and the remainder were gentiles. These believers needed to know the terms and conditions upon which God had called them. They were expected to (1) suffer with (or, like) Christ in the present, and (2) to be glorified together with him in the coming age so as to bless the world. It was important that such individuals know what God's reasoning was in their sufferings, and how he was building in them a character suited for the kingdom in which they hoped to have a part. We wish to look at the characteristics which are necessary to make one's calling and election sure.

"Let love be without dissimulation." Elsewhere Paul explains the need for love. Here he warns against feigned (or imitated) love. Imitation love appears polite and kind. However, the spirit of love will not be hypocritical. The kind of love to be nurtured will be genuine toward all, regardless of their sins and their present attitude towards their own recovery from sins. Secondly, this love will be expressed in action as well as words. Love is to be expressed towards God and towards all men in proportion as they try to be godlike. This is a love which extends itself towards all that is good, right, pure, and true.

Blessed Are They That Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness

"Abhor that which is evil." We are not speaking of merely avoiding evil, nor does this mean not to have a special weakness for evil. Just as we are to cultivate an active love for God and all things true, pure, and righteous, so we are to cultivate a distaste for every kind of sin and impurity. The more Christlike we become the more obviously these two characteristics will display themselves: love for good, hatred for sin. As we learn of the harmonies of heavenly love, they will become the theme of our lives; and as a result, all that is out of harmony will be the more discordant and obnoxious to us.

Holiness and sin are opposites. Our feelings towards these must be equally opposed the each other. To grow cool towards love is to lose some of our abhorrence of evil. Let us learn to actively work on our hatred of sin, selfishness, and impurity in its every form so that we will find our love and appreciation of all that is good correspondingly easier to develop.

"Cleave to that which is good." The thought of the text is that of being "cemented" to that which is good. There is a temptation which arises within ourselves, from the world, and from the devil to shy from those things that are good and pure and noble. Our resolve must be firm that no hazards will separate us from the grace of God. We will adhere to him and to the true and living way.

"Be kindly affectioned." Cultivate the affection which belongs in a family. There the blessing or favor of one is the blessing of all. Perhaps the Apostle is suggesting that no affection except such as is proper among brothers should be found among us:

"Love as brethren" (1 Pet. 3:8).

"In honor preferring one another." Rejoice if a brother has been honored. Rejoice even more than you would rejoice if you had been honored. We should be so unselfish that we would delight in seeing others honored. We should be so sympathetic that another's failure would hurt as if it had been our own. This is the spirit which sincerely rejoices with those who are happy and weeps with those who mourn.

"Not slothful in your affairs." "Slothful" in this case does not refer to the commercial or business aspect of our lives but to our lives in general. Those being addressed, those seeking to make their calling and election sure, are to do everything as though it were being done directly for the Lord. We live in a world full of opportunities: both good and evil. But there are only a few persons truly on the side of God and righteousness. Whoever realizes this and who is also truly devoted to the Lord will be aroused from the spirit of laxity which is natural to many. If the battle of truth against error does not awaken us to action for the Lord, it should be a warning that our heart is hard and that we need take action to keep it soft and sensitive. To a child-whether of God or man every experience is an opportunity to please its parent. So with God. Eating, drinking, business, family: all are opportunities to serve the interests of our Master.

"Fervent in spirit." "Fervor" is contrasted with "sloth." If the steward of divine mercy is slothful, it is because their love for the Lord is cool. The Apostle encourages us to be hot, fervent for the Lord. It reminds us of the Lord's words to the Laodicean church that was so boastful and proud of its own works while it was lukewarm to the spirit of love:

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16-17).

Let all who have received the Lord's spirit exercise care that they not become lukewarm and chance losing his favor. Let all work on their appreciation of God's mercy which will add fuel to the fire of our fervency, zeal to our love of the truth, purity to our hearts, and a yearning for usefulness to our service to others.

Hopeful, Patient, Prayerful

"Rejoice in hope." Do not expect much cause for joy if you intend to be faithful to your calling. We are told that the course is *"through much tribulation"* (Acts 14:22). Our rejoicing is to be in "hope"-looking into the future. The eye of faith can see what the natural eye cannot: The crown of life and the glorious things that God has in reservation for those that fervently love him. Here we find the advantage of doctrine. Doctrine inspires hope. Doctrine provides the foundation for hope. Knowledge cannot bring us into the kingdom, but it can be a help in preparing us for it.

Doctrine is a means of holding hope before our mind, and those hopes God has designed as stimulants to our running the spiritual race for the prize of the high calling.

"Patient in tribulation." The English word "tribulation" originates with a Latin word *tribulum*. This was the word for the old fashioned threshing machine the ancients used to clean wheat by removing its outer husk. How appropriate that thought is when applied to the Lord's consecrated people, who are scripturally represented as wheat. Our lives are like a kernel of grain. But this treasure is covered by the husk of worldly conditions. In order to prepare the wheat for use, each grain has to pass through enough "tribulation" so that those qualities can be removed which would render us useless in his future service.

"Instant in prayer." No advice could be more important than this.

*Ah, wither could we flee for aid when tempted, desolate, dismayed?
Or how the host of sin defeat had suffering saints no mercy-seat.*

Prayer, or communion with God, is indispensable to our spiritual warfare. Our appreciation of this privileged communion or our disregard of it indicates the fervency of our approach to the Lord. People fervently serve many schemes of their own making. Such people have little need or desire for prayer. But those who serve the Lord and his truth, from a hot, fervent heart, cannot help being so moved by their own ineffectiveness that they will want frequently approach the throne of grace for guidance and direction in the service they would offer to him.

There is a good test in this. If we are indifferent towards prayer, whether public or private, it is a warning. There may be two causes for this condition: (1) either our love is grown cold or (2) our love has been misdirected-aimed at some scheme, ambition, or even some form of service-instead of being aimed at our Lord. Whichever may be the case, we should take immediate action to correct the situation. Appreciation of prayer, just like our growth in love, and the fervency of our spirit is a matter for us to develop. The best fuel we can suggest is a review of the divine mercies that have already been ours.

Ideal Conduct Towards Others *"Distributing to the distresses of saints."* The Greek word for "distributing" means "to make common." The feeling that seems to be intended is of mutual

responsibility. While a person has a responsibility for the handling of their own affairs, nevertheless, there should prevail among the Lord's people a sense of mutual concern for each other. In this attitude, members of the body would make common to others of the spiritual family such of their things as the others might have need. Love, not selfishness, is to be the controlling factor of our association.

"Given to hospitality." The Apostle is not saying that if a request is made of us we should not be inhospitable. Literally the meaning of the phrase is to follow after hospitality, and the idea is much more along the line of going out after, searching for, opportunities to be hospitable. The principle may apply to the poor as well as the rich. If what we have is plain, the hospitable use of it is just as pleasing as if it were elegant. It is our intentions which are being demonstrated more so than our possessions.

Some fail to take any steps to cultivate this grace. Worse than that, others are inclined to give better than they have, at the cost of indebtedness, for the sake of impressing those whom they would serve. This is wrong. It is not cultivating the grace of hospitality. It is cultivating evil and pride. This is a lesson about dissimulation, pretense, showing oneself to be better or more than he is. *"Bless them which persecute you."* This quotation addresses the mind which has been enlightened by the Bible. The line drawn in this instance is the line of direct opposition by Satan and those whose understanding he has darkened. Its importance is not found in trivial connections. The Lord is not referring to punishment for wrong doing or because we have been busy bodies or for nonsensical peculiarities. He is referring to direct persecution on account of the truth or actions which have been taken in upholding the truth. Such persecution implies that one's heart is filled with pity and sympathy, because what other heart could truly bless its persecutors and wish them only good. This is a heart overflowing with the Spirit of the Lord and one able to rejoice with those in prosperity and to weep with those in sorrow. This is a heart so filled with the Spirit that it may forget its own tribulations and adverse surroundings. *"Be of the same disposition toward each one."* Sympathy towards all, whether humble or refined, is encouraged.

"Mind not high things." Do not allow ecstasy to control your affections and sentiments. Bring your mind down to a level where you can sympathize with those who are in financial trouble or who are struggling with great and pressing problems. *"Be not wise in your own conceits."* This is an extension of humility. Those whose minds are set on high things habitually neglect the humbler ones of the Lord's people. They do so because of an inflated opinion of their own wisdom and intelligence. Conceit has a way of tarnishing an otherwise developed Christian character, and its results are to separate one from the humblest of the Lord's flock. What is more, there is nothing more dangerous than putting too much regard in your own wisdom. The Scriptures describe this as being "heady" and "high minded." It leads one into error and to a fall from both the letter and the spirit of the truth. *"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."* Be wary of this dangerous disease. Nothing can be so dangerous as this spirit. By it many are hindered in recognizing the real issues of the Lord's providence at this time. By it others are lead to methods and teachings which have not been authorized by the Lord. Let all of God's people be on guard against attacks of the Adversary from this quarter, especially those who think they know something of the Lord and those who are charged with teaching others something of the riches of divine grace.

Like Your Heavenly Father

"Recompense no man evil for evil." Many of the previous instructions have related to our dealings with brethren. Here the Apostle points to our conduct with men at large.

There is a tendency to recognize one line of justice and to vindicate all infractions of that justice, executing their own punishment upon evil doers. The Apostle points out that this is not the rule governing the family of the Lord. In the interest of society it is important for the world to have laws and to deal with criminals as the breakers of those laws. The Apostle is not treating these nor faulting them. He is treating the rather minor affairs of life in which various evils may be inflicted upon us-and which we may naturally resent-without coming directly under the control of civil law.

"Provide things honest in the sight of all men." Part of the requirement of God from men is the providing of the things needful for the sustenance of one's family. If one cannot obtain the employment they prefer, they are obligated to obtain some employment in order to meet their obligations.

Similarly, there are few things more dishonoring to the Lord than dishonesty among the Lord's people. Of course none of the saints would steal, but there are other ways of being dishonest. These failures slip past the consciences of many in this present day. One may make promises which intentionally mislead or seem to imply that we will settle legitimate debts which we have no intention of honoring. Some lie to themselves, calling it faith in God when they spend money they don't possess in the hope that God will somehow provide their needs. God does not authorize any to enter into debt for him. It is erroneous to think that he will bail us out if we have acted thus. The scriptural injunction is quite to the contrary: *"Owe no man anything."* It is a good idea to live within one's income and to *"lay by in store that we may have to give to him that needeth."*

"Live as peaceably with all men as lieth within the range of your possibilities." There are a variety of crooked minds in this world. Our own personalities are also complicated by various imperfections (notwithstanding the work of grace presently underway). It will be difficult, then, to avoid all friction. In the interests of peace we are to submit to wrongs and injustices with grace. But there is a place where a line of separation must be drawn. Our desire for peace cannot rule in places where eternal principles are involved. This is a great difficulty, because those who are naturally disposed to peace are tempted to pursue peace at the expense of principle and in conflict with divine commands. On the other hand there are those who are naturally more combative. Such have need to guard themselves against the opposite tendency. The naturally combative need to develop their desire for peace, which is a part of the character we are to copy.

The rule should be, *"First pure [truthful and loyal to righteousness] then peaceable"*, (James 3:17).

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves. Preferably, get out of the way of your opponents and their wrath, remembering that it is written, *"...vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord."* We do not need to feel that justice needs to be vindicated at our hands. God will vindicate his own name and his own justice. If it were left in our hands to administer justice, we would be likely to make many mistakes: especially when the matters involved wrongs done to ourselves. Learn the wisdom of preferring God to do the evening of scores. He will repay all evil doers with greater mercy than we might summon. Let us learn to grow strong in mercy and sympathy, because either in the present life or in that which is to come we shall all reap according to what we have sown.

It is easy to see why we are taught to be kind to our enemies and not to see them want for the necessities of life. Such treatment will do more for the cause of good than any other course, and it is likely to win them as friends. We are not to treat them so kindly, however, that they feel badly because of our generosity. We are to treat them with kindness because love is the ruling guideline of our personality under the guidance of the holy Spirit, the New Commandment of our Lord and Master. We are to treat them thus whether we melt them by our kindness or not.

Bless Them That Persecute You

"Be not overcome of evil." There is a constant battle between good and evil. Each force has its servants. We have enlisted on the side of the good, under the Captain of our salvation, and we are engaged in a "good fight."

We may never assume the weapons of the enemy. We have no need for evil words, methods, or manners.

To do so is to join the enemy, for *"by their fruits ye shall know them,"* and we certainly do not want to imply that their weapons are stronger than the weapons of God. To answer anger with anger, evil report with evil report, slander with slander, persecution with persecution, or blow with blow would be to try overcoming evil with evil. We are commanded to avoid all that is natural to our senses so that we may grow in the ways of the new nature. To be misled by the Adversary is to be overcome by evil.

"Overcome evil with good." We learn two lessons by this direction: (1) Good is practical and (2) it is preferable. Faith accepts these simple declarations but only experience can ratify them. Whoever has tried, has found that evil can be overcome with good. Not infrequently, however, all the good that you can do in return for evil is insufficient to change the evil in the evil-doer. He goes on his way, is more insistent and more intolerant. The course of the Lord's people cannot vary. They are authorized only to do good and to continue in so doing.

In this course of action we are following the divine example. He causes rain to fall upon the crops of the good and those of the evil. He causes sunshine to come indiscriminately upon the just and the unjust. *"His tender mercies are over all his people."* By and by, when his vengeance shall be exercised it will still be in love and kindness. Those who feel his vengeance will be benefited by the discipline of their troubles. Those who are not benefited will, mercifully, be cut off from among the people so that their harmful and disruptive influence will be removed forever. Let us all try the harder to live the new life.

What Think Ye of Christ?

Jesus challenges the attention of the world by his many sidedness. He meets the needs of all classes and conditions of men. As deep answereth unto deep so does he respond to the movements within the heart of man. Call the roll of the world's workers and ask them "What think ye of Christ?"

Their answers amaze us by revealing the many ways in which men can receive him.

To the artist he is the One Altogether Lovely.
To the architect he is the Chief Corner Stone.
To the astronomer he is the Sun of Righteousness
To the baker he is the Living Bread.
To the banker he is the Hidden Treasure.
To the biologist he is the Life.
To the builder he is the Sure Foundation.
To the carpenter he is the Door.
To the doctor he is the Great Physician.
To the educator he is the Great Teacher.
To the farmer he is the Sower and the Lord of the Harvest.
To the florist he is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley.
To the geologist he is the Rock of Ages.
To the horticulturist he is the True Vine.
To the judge he is the Righteous Judge, the Judge of all men.
To the juror he is the Faithful and True Witness.
To the jeweler he is the Pearl of Great Price.
To the lawyer he is the Counselor, the Lawgiver, Advocate, Mediator.
To the newspaper man he is the Good Tidings of Great Joy.
To the oculist he is the Light of the Eye.
To the philanthropist he is the Unspeakable Gift.
To the philosopher he is the Wisdom of God.
To the preacher he is the Word of God.
To the railroad man he is the New and Living Way.
To the sculptor he is the Living Stone.
To the servant he is the Good Master.
To the statesman he is the Desire of All Nations.
To the theologian he is the Author and Finisher of our Faith.
To the toiler he is the Giver of Rest.
To the sinner he is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.
To the Christian he is the Son of the Living God, the Savior, Redeemer, and Lord.

What is he to you?

- Selected

Our Clock of Life

Our clock of life is wound but once,
And no one has the power,
To tell just when the hands will stop,
At late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own;
Live, love, toil with a will;
Place no faith in tomorrow, for
Your clock may then be still.

A Christian's Prayer

Father, take the life thou gavest,
Cleanse and purify, refine;
Patient, trusted, tried, unselfish,
Shape it more and more like thine,

Make me watchful, thoughtful, careful
Always of the little things;
Keep me loving, sweet and helpful,
Give the joy Thy presence brings.

In thy loving kindness lead me,
Let me live as in thy sight;
What in confidence thou givest,
Help me, Lord, to use it right.

Take my little, bless, increase it,
Break the bread of life through me,
May the fragments not be wasted -
All the praise belongs to thee.

- E. L. Mapes

Worshipping Fellow Messengers

God's people are to love and esteem one another in proportion as they recognize in each other the spirit of God, of Christ, of holiness, and devotion to truth and righteousness. The Apostle says the faithful should be esteemed *"very highly in love for their work's sake"* (1 Thess. 5:13). While there may be a danger that some will fail to render *"honor to whom honor is due"* (Rom. 13:7), there is danger also that some might render too much honor to human instruments whom God is pleased to use in connection with the service of the truth. It is proper, therefore, that we call attention to the danger of man-worship.

This matter is forcibly brought to our attention in Revelation (Rev. 22:9). John the Revelator, who, representing the living saints all through the Gospel Age was permitted to see various features of the unfolding of the divine plan, fell down to worship the angel who had shown these things to him. There has been a similar tendency on the part of many to give more than love, respect, and honor to the servants of God who from time to time have been used as special servants in bringing to the attention of the church things new and old, or the particular brother or sister who was the means of conversion or other spiritual benefit.

This attitude was present in the early church. Some exalted one apostle and some another as their chief and master, and naming themselves as his disciples, saying "I am of Paul" or "I am of Apollos" or "I am of Peter." Paul assures them that this disposition indicates a measure of carnality and he says Paul, Apollos, and Peter, are merely the servants or channels through whom God has been pleased to send the blessings of truth. *"Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase"* (1 Cor. 3:7,8). He indicates thus that they should recognize, not the channels through whom the blessings came, but the Lord, the author of their blessings, and loyally bear no other name than his who died for and redeemed them.

When the church began to rid itself of the gross darkness of the Dark Ages under the help of the reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others, they properly had respect for those whom God had honored as the instruments in the work of reformation. But again the tendency to "worship" the messengers, the human agents, instead of the divine Author was manifested. Today there are thousands who call themselves by the name of Luther, Calvin, Wesley, Campbell and who give greater respect to their teachings than to the Word of God - with corresponding injury to themselves.

Likewise, in the light of truth, shining more clearly than before, there is need to be on guard against this carnal tendency which has had such a damaging influence.

John fell down to worship the angel *who* had shown him the wonders of the divine plan. The angel's refusal to accept homage should be a lesson to all ministers (servants-messengers) of God. He said, *"See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow servant [not thy Lord and Master], and [fellow] servant of thy brethren the Prophets, and [fellow-servant] of [all] them which keep the sayings of the book. Worship God [the source from which comes all these blessings and all this light]"* (Rev. 22:9). All servants of God are fellow-servants regardless of the time or extent of their service.

The Apostle calls attention to this tendency toward man-worship in his epistle to the Colossians, saying, *"Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels [messengers]"* (Rev. 2:18, 19)." The intimation is that this temptation will come craftily, and not by brazen demands for reverence. Such is the reverence accorded in general to the ministry of

nominal churches. Ministers who seem meek and who would not think of demanding reverence or worship nevertheless accept their flock's voluntary title, "Reverend" and encourage it, and feel offended if reverence or worship of this sort is not rendered. The effect has been to injure the household of faith, to give an over-confidence in the judgment and word of the minister in spiritual things, so that many neglect to prove their faith by God's word and to trust implicitly to its authority.

There is danger among those who do not use the title "Reverend." It should be remembered that control resides in the congregation and not in self-appointed leaders, whether they seek to serve a dozen or thousands. The church of Christ should recognize the leading of her Head and know their leaders to be of his choice (cf. Heb. 13:7,17,24, Diaglott). They should also be aware of any disposed to ignore those rights by taking the place of leadership without the specific request of the congregation, beguiling the company into supposing that the leader alone is competent to judge and decide for the congregation as to the Lord's choice, and thus failing to hold the Head (Christ) as the only real teacher, who is able and willing to guide all the meek in judgment because they are his church" -- his body."

This beguiling of the flock away from the only Shepherd is not only the fault of the "leaders." There seems to be a tendency among those who have the nature of true, humble sheep to follow one another. It is a lesson for all to learn--that each sheep recognize as leaders only such as are in full accord with the voice and spirit of the Chief Shepherd (Christ), and the undershepherds (the apostles), and that each sheep see to it that he eats only clean provender and drinks only pure water as directed by the Shepherd (cf. Ezek. 34:17-19). This implies the exercise of individual conscience on the part of each member of Christ's flock on matters of doctrine and practice. It tends to keep each one in sympathy and fellowship with the Shepherd, who knows each sheep and "*calleth his own sheep by name*" (John 10:3). The same intimate relationship of the individual Christian with the Lord is illustrated in the figure of Christ as the head and the church as members of his body (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:15,16).

As we have been by God's grace used in the ministry of the gospel it may not be out of place to say what we have frequently said in private, namely that while we appreciate the love, sympathy, and confidence of fellow-servants and of the household of faith, we want no homage, no reverence for ourselves or our writings. Nor do we wish that any should be called by our name. The name of him who died for all -- the name Christian -- is sufficient to designate the spiritual sons of God, the true brethren of Christ, and whatever is more than this comes of evil, of carnality, and tends toward more of the same.

Nor would we have our writings revered or regarded as infallible or on a par with the Scriptures. The most we claim or have ever claimed for our teachings is that they are what we believe to be harmonious interpretations of the divine Word in harmony with the spirit of truth. We still urge, as in the past, that each reader study the subjects we present in the light of the Scriptures, proving all things by the Scriptures, accepting what they see to be thus approved, and rejecting all else. It is to this end, to enable the student to trace the subject in the divinely inspired record, that we so freely intersperse both quotations and citations of the Scriptures upon which to build.

- C. T. Russell, from 1896

Taking God's Name in Vain

"Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." - Exodus 20:7

Without question, the Apostle Paul's statement is true that the rules and regulations found in the Jewish Law (through which the Jews found only death) were removed by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. Thus, there is no longer any condemnation to them that are in him by faith in his blood. Having been fulfilled, the ceremonial features of the Law passed away (cf. Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15; Rom. 8:1; Matt. 5:18). It is also true that the moral precepts of the Law never passed away. It is further true that they never will pass away because they are a part of Jehovah's eternal law of righteousness.

Our theme text is one of these precepts and it is generally recognized, even by those beyond the circle of believers, as being the second of the Ten Commandments. Because the principle remains with us today, we are struck with the importance of the question: What would the Lord consider a "vain" use of his name?

The expression "in vain" suggests a "false" usage or using something "to no purpose." We think it will be seen as we progress that the meaning here is a much finer distinction of irreverence than either of the commonly used words "profanity" or "blasphemy." To profane the name of God is to use it with disrespect and irreverence. To blaspheme is to revile, reproach, and abuse his name. It is unquestionably wrong to do either, but those who either profane or abuse his name in a milder sense are no less in error and we are assured by Scripture that they will not be judged to be without guilt. Some of our readers may think this subject too offensive to appear on these pages. We think after the degree to which this admonition should infiltrate our lives becomes a little clearer that they will be fully in agreement.

We Are Guideposts

"Behold," says the psalmist (Psa. 51:6), "thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom" in the heart. The apostle Paul exhorts, saying: "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ [Jehovah's representative] depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son (Psa. 50:16-20).

The prophet Isaiah spoke of such (Isa. 29:13) and unfortunately many have arisen to fulfill his words. Our Lord applied this prophecy to some in his day, saying:

"This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8,9).

Consider this point carefully: if the Lord opposes anything short of candor and honesty in those who claim to be his children, or Christians, just how careful ought we to be in connection with his holy name! If we claim to be God's children, followers of his son, then we stand before the world as his representatives. Presumably, all of our words and actions are open to criticism if they are not fully in agreement with his indwelling spirit. We are like guideposts along the world's dark and uncertain way. If we are not true to our profession, we stand as false signposts that may cause others to lose their way or wander into unintended traffic jams. To take the name of God, then, claiming to be his sons and Christians, or followers of Christ, without a corresponding determination to fairly represent him is to sin against God -- of which none who do so will be held guiltless.

The Christian Gains Mastery Over Sin

"Let every one," therefore, *"that nameth the name of Christ [Jehovah's representative] depart from iniquity."* *"If I regard iniquity in my heart,"* says the psalmist, *"the Lord will not hear me..."* (Psa. 66:18). The work of the Christian's life is warfare against iniquity. Even though the grace of God abounds towards us through Christ, the Apostle tells us that we are not to continue in sin so that grace may continue to abound (Rom. 6:1,2). By our covenant with God we have declared ourselves dead to sin, and further we have disavowed any future desire to live in sin. If we continue in sin or if we stop our struggle against sin, we are proving ourselves false to our claim.

"Shall we," then, *"that are dead to sin, live any longer therein"* (Rom. 6:2)? God forbid. Do not let sin rule your body. Count yourself dead to sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:11-12). These words imply a constant warfare against the sins which are such a natural part of our human mind. The struggle will be long and constant until the imprisoning power of sin is broken. Even then only constant vigilance will keep sin in subjection. A Christian who is true to his claims to discipleship is one who presses into the warfare every day, realizing some increasing degree of mastery of sin in himself and one who is able to distinguish with the passing of time some improvements in his own behavior. He must grow more Christ-like, more self-possessed, more meek, more gentle, more disciplined and refined, more temperate in all things, and more possessed of the mind that was in Christ Jesus. His old temper and ugly disposition must disappear and the new mind is to assert its presence in power. Thus, the silent example of a holy life reflects honor upon that holy name which it is our privilege to bear before the world: as living epistles, known and read of all with whom we have contact.

Faith and Piety

The formation of such a pure, noble character is the result of a heart that receives divine truths with readiness. Or, one might say that it is the power of divine truth to transform an entire character-when it is heartily received and submitted to. *"Sanctify them through the truth; Thy Word is truth,"* was the Lord's petition for us. He prayed that the faithful would not fall into the error of some-thinking that the work of sanctifying could proceed better without the truth than with it. We need the guidance of God's truth in order to pursue a holy life. And our Lord implies that all the truth is necessary and that all truth is to be found in God's word. We need not look to new revelations, visions, or dreams. Of the Word of God the Apostle says, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

Scripture is how the spirit, mind, or disposition of God is revealed. Scripture encourages us to let that disposition control us-richly. As we commune with him in prayer, and as we study his mind

as revealed on the pages of Scripture, we receive a sense of how he thinks and of what we must do to conform to his will. To live a holy life is not to accomplish any special things. To live a holy life is to live daily a life of quiet routine, conformity to God's will. It is done in secret, prayerful communion; it is done in our daily service; it is done in zealous activity in the proclamation of the gospel.

In fact, there is no such thing as "wonderful piety," or "eminent piety," about which some write. There is nothing amazing or out of the ordinary about piety: We ought to be pious. Why not? And when our piety becomes "eminent" we need be careful of self-righteousness and sanctimonious vain-glory. Neither is there anything amazing about a clear and steady faith; of confident trust in the promises of God. Why should we not have a sure and strong faith? The Christian who bears the strongest testimony for God is the one whose faith is simple enough to take him at his word and whose piety consists of reverent, loyal obedience to the will of God as he learns it through the study of his word. Such need not hesitate to take to themselves the name of God-to declare themselves the children of God. They are already followers of Christ, openly professing through their lives that they are daily submitting themselves to God to be lead by the influence of his spirit.

Beware of Error!

The psalmist describes as "wicked" those who bear the name of Christ in vain -- who claim to be God's children, who claim to be lead of his spirit -- but whose actions demonstrate their hatred for the instruction of the Lord and who cast the Lord's words behind them. These have much in common with thieves and robbers who steal what is not theirs by teaching men to rise up in life by ways disavowed by God. These are opposed to God-not in one point or several -- their entire pathway is contrary to his. Yet they claim to be his ambassadors and representatives, and they convince others that they are such. Beware of taking the name of the Lord "in vain" personally or through the actions of others.

What is the accusation of our righteous Judge? *"What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? ..."* The words of our text assure us that such shall not go without punishment. Nor will those escape who aid or abet any of these; for if we consent with thieves and become partakers with adulterers we shall surely share their reward of divine indignation.

The Lord's people are admonished to separateness from all such. He would not have them commune with or aid them in any way. He does not own them as his and would not have us bid them God-speed. Nor would he encourage them to bear his name, or to assemble with his people for prayer and praise, or to pose as his ambassadors of truth. The only proper course for such is to repeat their first works: to repent, to turn humbly to God, and to obey his instruction.

When one considers what it means to take the name of God in vain we are overwhelmed to realize how many are doing it. There seem to be but a few who apply their hearts to instruction, and without hesitation multitudes take his name in vain. Some do so recklessly, because it may appear to be customary among respectable people-because Christ's name is like a passport of some social and business value. Others are more calculating: what gross and hideous doctrines have shielded themselves under the name of Christian. *"But in vain they do worship me,"* saith the Lord Jesus Christ, *"teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matt. 15:9). Let all that name the name of Christ depart from iniquity and apply their hearts to instruction. These shall be lead of God in green pastures and beside still waters. Their table will be bountifully spread and their cup of blessed joy will overflow. But, the wrath of God will be revealed against all who take

his hallowed name in vain, however they may band themselves together and however loudly they may proclaim themselves heaven's appointed messengers.

Not my own! my time, my talent,
Freely all to Christ I bring,
To be used in joyful service
For the glory of my king.

On Types or "Allegory"

Allegory proves nothing. It is not Scripture, but an example borrowed from Scripture so as to declare a text or a conclusion from the Scripture more clearly and to root it and engrave in it the heart. A similitude or an example prints a thing deeper in the wits of man than does a plain statement and leaves behind it as it were a sting to prick and to awaken him. If I could not prove with an open text that which the allegory expresses, then the allegory is an amusement and of no greater value than a bedtime story... In many places, where the text seems at first hard to understand, the context makes it plain.

We need to take heed that we are not beguiled by false allegories, whether they be drawn from the New Testament or the Old. One needs to put on their glasses and to arm themselves against evil spirits... Beware of allegories; there is not a more apt thing with which to beguile than an allegory; nor a more subtle and pestilent thing in the world to make a false idea passable than an allegory.

Contrariwise, there is not a better, more moving, or mightier weapon to ease the understanding than an allegory. Allegories make a man quick witted and imprint wisdom in him, and make that knowledge it to abide where bare words go but in one ear and out the other.

- Demaus

Entered Into Rest

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