

According to Paul

FRANK L. COX

*A Compend
of
The Teaching
of
The Great Apostle
in
Ninety-Nine Sermon Outlines*

Second Printing

GOSPEL ADVOCATE COMPANY
Nashville, Tennessee
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ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CONVERSION OF SAUL

Acts 9: 1-19a

Next to the life, death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is perhaps the greatest event recorded on the pages of history. In order to properly evaluate his conversion, we need to know something of his early life and attitude toward Christ and the church.

So, let us consider :

- I. *Saul, the persecutor.* As a persecutor he is introduced. (Acts 7: 58; 8: 1.)
 1. A zealous persecutor. (Acts 8: 3.) He scourged the disciples (Acts 26: 11); imprisoned both men and women (Acts 22: 4); voted for their execution (Acts 26: 10; 22: 20). He didn't stop with the cities of Judea; he "persecuted them even unto foreign cities." (Acts 26: 11.)
 2. A persistent persecutor. He had looked into the angelic face of Stephen before the Sanhedrin; he had heard that man's unanswerable defense; he had heard him pray for his executioners; yet, he was unchanged in attitude.
 3. A conscientious persecutor. (Acts 34: 1; 26: 9.) This explains why he was so zealous and determined in his course.
- II. *The persecutor's last journey.* (Verses 1, 2.) He entertained no forebodings. Little did he realize whom he would meet, or what would happen on the way.
 1. His mental attitude: "Breathing threatening and slaughter," etc. A most unlikely subject for conversion.
 2. His mission: To ferret out Christians in the city of Damascus and bring them bound to Jerusalem.
- III. *The arrest on the way.* (Verses 3-7.) Concerning this marvelous event, we shall observe :

1. The place of it: "Nigh unto Damascus." The Lord allowed him to get almost near enough to strike. Was this to remind Saul of his weakness and helplessness?
 2. The manner of it:
 - (a) By a light. (Verse 3; Acts 22: 6, 7a; 26: 13.)
 - (b) By a voice. (Verses 4-7; Acts 26: 14.) All present heard the voice, but only Saul understood. (Acts 22: 9.) For a parallel, see John 12: 28, 29.
 3. The purpose of it: To make him a witness and a minister, or an apostle. (Verses 15, 16; Acts 26: 16-18.)
- IV. *The journey resumed.* (Verses 8, 9.) Ah, but what a different man!
1. He was blind. He had intended to use his eyes to ferret out the Christians in Damascus, but now he cannot see.
 2. He was helpless. He had led others to the persecution; now, he is led by one of them.
 3. He was humbled. He had purposed to dispel Christians from the city; now, he is obliged to dwell with one of them.
 4. He was penitent. He went to persecute, now, he prays. His fast was emblematic of his spiritual condition.
- V. *The destination.* (Verses 10-19a.) The call and mission of Ananias show the divine use of human agents in conversion. Let us note Saul's needs and how they were answered:
1. Sight—he had been blind three days. By the hand of Ananias, God restored his sight.
 2. Forgiveness. He had been "the chief of sinners." By baptism his sins were washed away. (Acts 22: 16.)
 3. A guide and comforter. His great work with all of its trials was before him. The Holy Spirit answered this need.
 4. Physical strength. He had fasted three days. Strength was supplied by means of food.

PAUL'S FIRST RECORDED ADDRESS**Acts 13: 13-43**

The place was Antioch of Pisidia. The address deserves special attention for two reasons. First, because it was the apostle's first recorded address. Second, because it is the only evangelistic sermon he delivered to the Jews of the Dispersion, which has been preserved, unless we include the few words spoken to the Jews in the city of Rome. (Acts 28: 17-28.)

Note:

- I. *The place of it:* In the synagogue. This means that Paul's hearers were Jews and Jewish proselyte: for only such used the synagogue for a place of worship. Though the people of the audience believed in God, they had not learned of Jesus.
- II. *The time of it:*
 1. "On the sabbath day." Why did the evangelists choose that day of the week? Only because it afforded them an opportunity to speak—the Jews assembled on that day. (See Col. 2: 14-16.)
 2. When the opportunity was given. (Verses 15, 16a.)
- III. *The contents of it.* (Verses 16-41.) It is interesting to compare this sermon with Peter's Pentecost sermon and Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin, observing that all three followed the same line of thought. Note the points of emphasis:
 1. The providential dealings of God with Israel, which culminated in the coming of the Savior. (Verses 16-25.)
 2. By his death and resurrection, Jesus proved to be the Savior of the world. (Verses 26-37.)
 - (a) In accordance with prophetic utterances, Jesus was crucified and buried. (Verses 27-29.)
 - (b) God raised him from the dead and showed him alive. (Verses 30, 31.)
 - (c) The resurrection of Jesus a matter of prophecy. (Verses 32-36.)

3. The proclamation of forgiveness by faith in Christ. (Verses 38, 39.)
This is a blessing which Moses' law could not grant.
 4. He concluded with a warning. (Verses 40, 41.) By rejecting the gospel of Christ, they would involve themselves in guilt and doom.
- IV. *The impression that it made.* (Verses 42, 43.) The auditors were so deeply impressed that they invited the evangelists to return. After the dismissal, many followed the preachers doubtless in admiration for them and their message. Paul and Barnabas urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Let Us Learn:

1. That we, like Paul and Barnabas, should accept every opportunity to proclaim the gospel.
2. That forgiveness of sins is a blessing which can be obtained only in the Christ.
3. That, if we reject the gospel, we invite sorrow and eternal doom. (See 2 Thess. 1: 7-9.)



PAUL'S ADDRESS IN ATHENS

Acts 17: 22-32

In this city the apostle reasoned with his own countrymen in their synagogue and disputed with certain philosophers in the marketplace. After ascending the steps of the Areopagus, he delivered one of the greatest speeches of his life.

Here we have—

- I. *The theme announced:* "An Unknown God." (Verses 22, 23.) A more skillful introduction to an address likely to provoke resentment could not be imagined. The fact that such an inscription was found in the city was, the speaker argued, a tacit admission on the part of the citizens that they did not know the true God, but that it was possible for them to know him. The apostle's object was to bring before them the God after whom they were groping.
- II. *The theme discussed.* (Verses 24-31.) The address falls into three parts.

1. God and the world. (Verses 24, 25.) Paul presented the "Unknown God"—
 - (a) As the world's Creator: "God that made the world," etc. The gods of the city were not creators, but creatures—the works of men's hands.
 - (b) As the Lord of the universe: "Lord of heaven and earth." If God is the Creator, it follows that he must be the Possessor and Ruler of heaven and earth.
 - (c) As the Omnipresent One: "Dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Being the Creator, he cannot be limited to one spot or confined to a "temple made with hands." (See 1 Kings 8: 27.)
 - (d) As the Self-sufficient One: "Neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything." Unlike the idols, God is not served by men's hands. Man can give God nothing but what he already has in abundance, except the love of the heart.
 - (e) As the Source of life: "He himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." The idols were lifeless. How could they give life, seeing that life can only come from life?
2. God and the human race. (Verses 26-29.) He exhibited the race—
 - (a) As one family: "He made of one every nation of men," etc. The human race is one in origin, one in nature, one in responsibility. Science proves that all races come from a common stock. With all of its beauty and perfection, the Greek language had no word to express the brotherhood of man—the Greeks did not believe in the brotherhood of man.
 - (b) As guided by the Divine hand: "Having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation." God has fixed for all the same seasons and the same limits of land and sea, of heat and cold, of desert and mountain, beyond which men cannot dwell.
 - (c) As capable of knowing God and its obligation to him: "That they should seek God, if haply they might feel

after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us," etc.

(d) As convinced of the folly of thinking that God could be material substance: "Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver," etc. Beings with life cannot be the offspring of lifeless, motionless idols, though made of metals most precious.

3. The call to repentance. (Verses 30, 31.) God calls the living to repentance; he will call the dead from their graves to answer in judgment. This fact is assured by the resurrection of Jesus.

III. *The reaction.* (Verse 32.)

1. There was derision: for "some mocked." Some things they heard were contrary to their preconceived notions. The easiest way to escape his powerful appeal was to sneer at him.
2. There was delay: "We will hear thee again." They held nothing against the speaker, but dismissed him for the present.
3. There was belief. Two prominent names are mentioned—Dionysius, a member of the august court; and a woman named Damarius.



REPENTANCE

Acts 17: 30, 31

Repentance is the change of the will. (Matt. 21: 28-31.) It is the turning from sin, motivated by godly sorrow. (Luke 11: 32; Jonah 3: 10; 2 Cor. 7: 10.)

According to our text, repentance is—

- I. *A divine command:* God "commandeth men," etc.
 1. Preached by the forerunner. (Matt. 3: 1, 2, 7, 8.)
 2. Proclaimed by the twelve. (Mark 6: 12.)
 3. Included in the great commission of Christ. (Luke 24: 46, 47.)

4. Proclaimed by the Lord's spokesmen as they labored under that commission. (Acts 2: 38; 2 Peter 3: 9.)
- II. *A universal necessity*: Men "should all everywhere repent." Why is this true?
1. Because sin is universal. This is the declaration of God's word. (Rom. 3: 9-18, 23; 1 John 1: 8-10.) This is also the testimony of our own hearts. Because sin is universal, repentance should also be. "All have sinned"; therefore "all" should repent.
 2. Because sin is destructive in nature. There is no part of man that it does not injure. Associated with sin are all the dark experiences of life—pain, shame, sorrow, death. (See Ezek. 18: 30, 31; Luke 13: 3; Gal. 6: 7, 8.)
- III. *A present obligation*: "The times of ignorance God overlooked; but *now*," etc.
1. Because of *past* mercies: "The times of ignorance God overlooked." In the word "overlooked" lie treasures of mercy. (See Rom. 2: 4.)
 2. Because of *present* revelation. The increase of knowledge brings an increase of responsibility. Since the light has appeared, we should walk in the light. (See Luke 12: 47, 48.)
- IV. *Impelled by the judgment*. (Verse 31.) Concerning the final judgment let us make some observations:
1. The time is fixed. God "hath appointed a day." (See Matt. 10: 15; Heb. 9: 27.)
 2. Its universal scope. God "will judge the world." All nations. His own people. (Matt. 25: 31ff; 1 Peter 4: 17.)
 3. The standard has been announced: "In righteousness." Not the righteousness of man, but of God as revealed in the life and teaching of the Son of God. (John 12: 48.)
 4. The judge has been named: "By the man whom he hath ordained"— the Christ. (See John 5: 22, 27.)

5. The assurance given: "He hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath been raised from the dead." For various reasons this is true:
- (a) The resurrection of Jesus proved his claim that he was the Son of God. (Rom. 1: 4.)
 - (b) It proved that his teaching is true, a part of which was that he should judge the world.
 - (c) It proved the resurrection of the dead, without which there could be no judgment.



PAUL'S ADDRESS TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

Acts 20: 13-38

Returning from his third evangelistic tour, the apostle stopped at Miletus, a city on the seacoast of Ionia, about thirty-six miles south of Ephesus. Thither he summoned the elders of the Ephesian church. When they arrived he delivered unto them his farewell address. (Verses 13-18a.)

The speech may be divided into four parts, namely:

- I. *Retrospective.* (Verses 18b-21.) In these words we have a brief review of his ministry. Note the characteristics of it.
 1. It was unconcealed. (Verse 18.)
 2. It was humble, sympathetic, courageous. (Verse 19.)
 3. It was filled with instruction, both public and private. (Verse 20.)
 4. It dealt with the great essentials of the Christian religion. (Verse 21.)
- II. *Prospective.* (Verses 22-27.) Awaiting him were afflictions, which he faced with calm courage. (Verses 22, 23.)
 1. Because of the motive that moved him. (Verse 24.)
 2. Though it meant separation from those near and dear. (Verse 25.)
 3. Because he possessed a clear conscience. (Verses 26, 27.)

III. *Exhortation.* (Verses 28-31.) In this he earnestly admonished them—

1. To watch their personal life.
2. To tend the flock of God. In this connection he anticipated hurtful influences both from within and from without.
3. To watch over the interests of the church as he had watched.

IV. *Valedictory.* (Verses 32-35.)

1. He commended them to God, and to the word of his grace. (Verse 32.)
 2. He encouraged them to a life of unselfishness, recalling the example he had set before them. (Verses 33, 34.)
 3. He exhorted them to remember the poor. (Verse 35.)
- In conclusion, we have the pathetic scene by the sea. (Verses 36-38.)

Note the prayer, the tears, the separation.



PAUL'S STAIRWAY ADDRESS

Acts 22: 1-29

Note: The apostle's arrest; the calm ease with which he adapts himself to the changed conditions; his winning courtesy; an explanation that first subdues, then enrages the listening mob.

"What nobler spectacle than that of Paul at this moment! There he stands, bound with two chains, ready to make his defense unto the people. The Roman commander sits by, to enforce order by his presence. An enraged populace looks up to him from below. Yet, in the midst of so many dangers, how self-possessed he is, how tranquil!"—Chrysostom.

He relates the story of his life:

I. *As a student.* (Verses 1-3.)

1. Of Jewish blood—not an Egyptian, as the captain had supposed.

2. Born in Tarsus—no mean city.
3. Taught by Gamaliel.
4. Schooled in the religion of the Pharisees.

II. *As a persecutor.* (Verses 4, 5.)

1. The object of his persecution: "This Way"—i.e., the people of "this Way."
2. The intensity of his persecution: "Unto the death."

III. *In the transition.* (Verses 6-16.)

1. The place: "Nigh unto Damascus."
2. The time: "About noon." That the glory of the light might be unmistakable.
3. The voice—a voice of protest, of enlightenment, of instruction.
4. His baptism at the hands of Ananias of Damascus.

IV. *As an object of persecution.* (Verses 17-21.)

1. Hated and hounded by the Jews—his own people.
2. Loved, protected, and used by the Lord who had called him.

In verses 22-29 we have the reaction of the mob. Note: The rage of the people—"Away with such a fellow"; the blunder of the Roman captain; the apostle's salvation through his Roman citizenship.



PAUL'S ADDRESS BEFORE FELIX

Acts 24: 1-23

Introduction. (Verses 1-10) Paul before Felix, the Roman governor. The accusers are represented by a professional advocate, Tertullus by name, "who glibly enough, but quite hypocritically in the name of the Jews commends the rule of the Roman governor, seeking to ingratiate his clients with the governor and thus win his case against the accused," against whom he brought three charges, namely: that he was guilty of sedition, therefore

disloyal to the Roman government; that he was guilty of heresy, "a ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes," therefore a renegade from the Jewish religion; and that he was guilty of profaning the temple (sacrilege), and thus affronting a worship Rome had agreed to protect.

Unlike his accusers, Paul had no hired attorney. Speaking in his own defense, he answered the charges in order as they had been presented.

I. *The charge of sedition was false.* (Verses 10-13.)

1. Because the time had been too brief for him to instigate a seditious movement. (Verse 11.)
2. Because no one could testify that he did create a disturbance. (Verse 12.)
3. Because the charge had not a shred of evidence to support it. (Verse 13.)

II. *The charge of heresy was untrue.* (Verses 14-16.)

1. Because he was but serving the God of the fathers. (Verse 14a.)
2. Because his faith was based upon the law and the prophets. (Verse 14b.)
3. Because with them he was moved by the same hope—the hope of the resurrection. (Verse 15.)
4. Because that hope had actuated his conscience to a keener sensitiveness in his relation to God and man. (Verse 16.)

III. *The charge of sacrilege was without foundation.* (Verses 17-23.)

1. Because that, instead of asking of his people, he had brought alms to the poor. (Verse 17.)
2. Because he had appeared in the temple purified. (Verse 18; Acts 21: 26.)
3. Because those who first seized him, and who were the only personal witnesses of what he did in the temple, were not present to testify against him. (Verses 19, 20.)
4. Because he had confined himself to the preaching of the resurrection of the dead. (Verse 21.)

The conclusion. (Verses 22, 23.) There was neither conviction nor release. The decision was delayed and the prisoner was granted the rights of a Roman citizen.



PAUL BEFORE FELIX AND DRUSILLA

Acts 24: 24-27

Note here:

I. *The unique audience.*

1. Felix, whom Josephus pronounced "the worst ruler that ever swayed the destiny of Judea." A slave by birth, he had been set free by the mother of the emperor. He was a libertine. He recognized no moral law.
2. Drusilla. A daughter of the Herod who beheaded James (Acts 12); grand-niece of the Herod before whom Jesus stood (Luke 23: 11); great-granddaughter of the Herod who slew the babies of Bethlehem in a mad effort to slay Jesus (Matt. 2: 16). It is said that she possessed rare physical beauty, but, like her ancestors, was foul in character. At this time she was living in adultery with Felix.

II. *A timely sermon.* Likely, the subject matter was not anticipated by the auditors. Both skill and courage were manifested by the preacher. How very fitting the theme! Three points were discussed:

1. "Righteousness," in opposition to the cruelty and injustice of the governor.
2. "Self-control," a virtue unknown to both Felix and Drusilla.
3. "Judgment to come," when all unrighteousness and intemperance will be judged. (See 1 Cor. 6: 9, 10; 2 Cor. 5: 10; Gal. 5: 19, 20.)

III. *The disappointing results.* Just what effect the sermon had on Drusilla, Luke does not inform us. In all probability, she was unaffected. Felix was "terrified," but without the moral courage to confess the Christ whom Paul preached;

conscience-stricken but impenitent. His failure to obey Christ may be explained by two forces in his heart:

1. The love of money. (Verse 26.) (In this connection, see 1 Tim. 6: 10.)
2. The love of praise and popularity. (Verse 27.)



PAUL BEFORE A KING

Acts 26: 2-32

On this occasion the apostle faces an audience of prominence. Mark the contrast: First, between the glitter of the king and the powerful governor, and the simplicity of the prisoner; second, between the splendor of the earthly position, and the dignity of character; third, between the trifling considerations of these unscrupulous hearers, and the sincere convictions of this great man of God.

The defense of his own person is seized by the prisoner as an opportunity to preach the Christ and, quite oblivious of his own state, he enters a master-plea for the risen Christ.

We note:

- I. *His happy approach.* (Verses 2, 3.) "It is the mark of a clear conscience, not to shrink from a judge, who has an accurate knowledge of the circumstances; but even to rejoice and to call himself happy."—Chrysostom.
- II. *His former religious life.* (Verses 4-11.)
 1. Nothing here to offend the Jews. (Verses 4, 5.)
 2. Though he had been true to the faith of the fathers, bitterness of persecution came. (Verses 6-8.)
 3. His former attitude toward the Christ. (Verses 9-11.)
Doubtless, as he spoke along this line, the king wondered why he had changed his attitude. The apostle will explain.
- III. *The story of his conversion.* (Verses 12-18.)
 1. The heavenly vision. (Verses 12-15.)
 2. The heavenly charge. (Verses 16-18.)

IV. *The lure of the heavenly vision.* (Verses 19-23.)

1. In response to the call from above, he went into lands far and near, unto Jews and Gentiles. (Verses 19, 20.)
 2. His zeal and his message, though in harmony with God's purpose, led to bonds and imprisonment. (Verses 21-23.)
- Conclusion. (Verses 24-32.) The powerful address made such an impression on the mind of Festus that he declared that the apostle's "much learning" had turned him to madness; while his earnest appeal to Agrippa brought from that wicked ruler the well-known statement, "With little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian." The verdict read: "Innocent; but the appeal to Caesar stands."

ROMANS

THE GOSPEL

Rom. 1: 16

Good tidings. (Luke 2: 8-11; Matt. 28: 1-8.)

Originating in divine love. (John 3: 16.)

Simple, yet very profound. Facts (1 Cor. 15: 1ff); commands (Acts 2: 38); promises (Rom. 6: 23).

Powerful to save. (Text.) It saves from the power, the practice and the guilt of sin.

Eternal in its scope. (1 Peter 1: 3-5.)

Leading us to heaven: It is God persuasive power. (John 12: 32.)



THE POWER OF GOD

Rom. 1: 16

Sin is the power of Satan unto damnation. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is the only power that can break the grip of sin and set men free.

The gospel is—

- I. God's *convincing* power. The hearing of it or the reading of it produces faith. (Rom. 10: 17; Acts 18: 8.)
- II. God's *convicting* power. He who listens to it soon becomes aware of his guilt. (Acts 2: 37; Heb. 4: 12.)
- III. God's *enlightening* power. It reveals to man God's plan of salvation. (Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 37, 38; 2 Peter 1: 5-8.)
- IV. God's *restraining* power. It points out evil and warns man of the danger of it. (Gal. 6: 7, 8; Rev. 21: 8.)
- V. God's *constraining* power. The love it reveals and the hope it instills lead men onward to a life of obedience and eternal blessedness. (Rom. 2: 4; 2 Cor. 5: 14.)
- VI. God's *cleansing* power. All who yield to its gentle sway are

washed, sanctified, made free from the stain and the guilt of sin. (Acts 2: 38; 1 Cor. 6: 9-11; 1 Peter 1: 22.)

VII. God's *exalting* power. In the last day it will raise the sainted dead and clothe them with the habiliments of immortality. (1 Thess. 4: 16-18.)

The gospel is a blessing to all who believe it, accept it and follow its gentle light. It means the same to all men—"to the Jew first, also to the Greek."



THE IMPARTIAL GOD

Rom. 2: 11

Impartiality is a trait of character to be admired in a parent, in a teacher, in a business manager, in a person of any calling. It is a necessary qualification of a judge. No amount of knowledge or ability can substitute for it. Yet, it is a rare quality—so seldom found.

The text speaks of the impartiality of God. Because all men are his creatures, he must make no difference in them. We shall note some instances of his impartiality.

- I. *He has declared all under sin* (Rom. 3: 23). Sons of men justify this declaration in that they admit they are sinners. The sins of God's most faithful servants are not concealed: Abraham, Moses, etc. Though David was a man "after God's own heart," his sins are recorded.
- II. *A common Savior is provided for all.* Jesus is not the Savior of a particular race or class of people. He died for all (John 3: 16). The gospel is a universal theme, the great commission is worldwide (Matt. 28: 19, 20). Jesus, the great sower, scatters seed upon every kind of soil (Matt. 13: 1ff).
- III. *The same invitation is extended to all.* To the weary and heavy laden (Matt. 11: 28). To the thirsty (John 7: 37). To all who will come (Rev. 22: 17). No man who responds will be rejected (John 6: 37).
- IV. *The same conditions of pardon are required of all.* Man-made religions frame the conditions of salvation in favor of

the rich and powerful; but God has one plan for all (Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Rom. 10: 12, 13).

V. *There is one standard of conduct for all.* Sons of men have various standards. A man has one standard for himself, another for his fellows; one for the male, another for the female; one for a church leader, another for the non-leader. But God, in his Book, has made no difference.

VI. *A common church for all.* The Lord did not build a church for each race, or class, or fancy of man. The word church, when used in the universal sense, is always in the singular number (Matt. 16: 18; Col. 1: 18; Eph. 4: 4). In Christ Jesus, all distinctions are erased (Gal. 3: 26-28).

VII. *In the manner of judging* (1 Peter 1: 17). He will not judge the people as nations, or as a class, but as individuals (Rom. 14: 12). He will not judge man according to his wealth or influence, but according to his deeds (2 Cor. 5: 10; Rev. 20: 12).

The impartiality of God not only reveals something of the character of God; it also tells us something about men—that all men are equal.

While God is no respecter of persons, he is a respecter of character. (See 1 Peter 3: 12, Acts 10: 34, 35.)



GOSPEL OBEDIENCE

Rom. 6: 17, 18

This language points out:

- I. *The state of sinners.* They are “servants (bondservants) of sin.” Sin is pictured as a raging, commanding king, and the sinner as a cowardly slave. He is a slave to the devil and to his own desires. (Verse 16) The members of his body are instruments of unrighteousness. (Verse 19b) His eyes see evil things; his ears hear evil things; his tongue speaks evil things; his hands work mischief; his feet follow in forbidden paths.
- II. *The obedience they should render:* That “form of teaching” or doctrine. The teaching or doctrine is the pattern or the

mould; the hearers are the metal. They conform their lives unto the pattern. Note here:

1. The doctrine. (1 Cor. 15: 1-8)
 - (a) "That Christ died," etc.
 - (b) "That he was buried."
 - (c) "That he hath been raised." etc.
 - (d) "That he appeared," etc.
2. The form of it.
 - (a) Death with Christ. (Rom. 6: 6; Gal. 2: 20; 5: 24)
 - (b) Burial with Christ. (Rom. 6: 4)
 - (c) Resurrection with Christ. (Col. 2: 12)
 - (d) Appearance in newness of life. (Rom. 6: 4, 5, 8)

III. *The spirit of acceptable obedience:* "From the heart." The heart consists of three functions, namely: The intellect, the emotions, and the will.

1. To obey intelligently, or understandingly. (Matt. 28: 19)
2. To obey emotionally, or affectionately. (Matt. 22: 37)
3. To obey willingly, or voluntarily. (Rev. 22: 17.)

IV. *The blessings that follow:*

1. Freedom. "Being made free from sin"—from the practice of it, from the guilt of it, from the bondage of it, from the horrible results of it. (See verse 14.)
2. A new Master: "Ye became servants of righteousness—servants of God." The members of the body become instruments of righteousness. (Verse 19) The eyes now see good things; the ears hear good things; the tongue speaks good things; the hands do good deeds; the feet follow in paths of peace.
3. A fruitful life: "Ye have your fruit unto sanctification." God plants trees in the garden not merely for ornaments, but also to bear fruit. (See John 15: 8; Gal. 5: 22, 23.) The community's greatest asset is a Christian.
4. A happy termination: "And the end eternal life." (See verse 22, 23.) An end without an end! The end is a wonderful beginning!

We are God's creatures. We live in his world and feast on his bounty. Upon us his marvelous love has been bestowed. Unto him we must answer at last in judgment. We

plead with you to accept this great doctrine without reservation, to obey it from the heart: for only the obedient shall see salvation. (See Matt. 7: 21; Heb. 5: 8, 9.)

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DEATH AND LIFE

Rom. 6: 23

Among the great verses in the Bible are the following: John 3: 16, Acts 2: 38; Rom. 1: 16; 12: 1; 1 Tim. 3: 16; Jas. 1: 27.

Ranking in importance with these passages is our text. In it the apostle Paul speaks of three things, namely: Sin, the wages of sin, and the gift of God.

I. *Sin.*

1. It is missing the mark—God's target.
2. It is a fall—a drop from a lofty position.
3. It is iniquity—a zigzag course or a departure from the straight line.
4. It is lawlessness—a disregard of divine law. (1 John 3: 4.)
5. It is unrighteousness—an ungodly manner of living. (1 John 5: 17.)
6. It is a failure to do good. (Jas. 4: 17.)

II. *The wages of sin.* Sin is here personified; he is a master paying his slaves for service.

1. "Wages" originally meant a soldier's small allowance for toilsome and dangerous service.
2. The hard-earned "wages of sin is death." God is the source of life. (Acts 17: 28.) From the source of life, sin separates us. (Isa. 59: 1, 2.) This results in death.
 - (a) Adam's sin brought physical death. (Rom. 5: 12.)
 - (b) Our own sins, unless we turn from them, will bring the second death. (Rev. 21: 8.)

III. *The gift of God.* Let us ask—

1. What is it?
 - (a) It is life. Life in any form is God's gift. (See Gen. 1.) Of all the gifts in man's possession, he prizes life most highly.

- (b) It is eternal life. It is eternal in duration. But it is more than that: for eternal existence in a world of sin is not desired. (See Psa. 55: 6; Job 7: 16.) It is a better life. It is a life of fellowship with the Eternal. (John 17: 3.)
2. Through what channel does it come? "Christ Jesus our Lord." In him is life and all spiritual blessings. (John 1: 4; Eph. 1: 3.) The invaluable gift comes through the channel.

We accept this gift when we accept the giver—the Christ. We accept the giver when we obey him from the heart. (Rom. 6: 17, 18.) Death and life are set before the sons of men; only by choosing life can we live. (Deut. 30: 19.) Though this is a short passage of scripture, it abounds in contrasts: Sin versus God; wages versus gift; death versus life.



HEIRS OF GOD

Rom. 8: 17

Let us inquire:

- I. *Who are the heirs of God?*
1. Not necessarily God's creatures. It is not written, "If creatures, then heirs."
 2. Not necessarily the descendants of the saints. It is not written, "If Abraham's children, according to the flesh, then heirs." (See Rom. 9: 7ff.)
 3. But the children of God: "If children, then heirs."
- II. *Of what are they heirs?* The Father's estate. He is the Lord of heaven and earth; all that he has he bestows upon his children. Let us consider what inspiration says about the inheritance. (1 Peter 1: 3-5.)
1. Its description:
 - (a) It is "incorruptible"—immortal in nature.
 - (b) It is "undefiled"—untarnished by sin.
 - (c) It "fadeth not away"—unfading in beauty.
 2. It is kept for the heirs: "Reserved in heaven for you." A lovely place prepared and set apart for them. No one can take it from them but the heirs themselves.

3. They are preserved for it. They "are guarded," etc. As heirs of the royal house, they are never left without an attendant.

III. *With whom are they heirs?* "Joint heirs with Christ." He shared with us our sorrow; he shall share with us his glory. We shall share—

1. His resurrection. (John 14: 19; 2 Tim. 1: 10.)
2. His nature. (Phil. 3: 21; 1 John 3: 2.)
3. His joy. (Matt. 25: 21.)
4. His eternal home. (John 14: 1-3.)

IV. *How to become a child?* Since we cannot inherit unless we are children, it is important to know the answer to this question. We become children by adoption. (Rom. 8: 15.) We gain entrance into the divine family by faith—a faith repentant (Acts 2: 38); a faith unashamed (Matt. 10: 32, 33); a faith obedient (Gal. 3: 27, 27).

V. *What does adoption involve?*

1. A change of abode. The adopted dwells in the Father's house. (Psa. 23: 6.)
2. A new name. He takes the family name. (1 John 3: 1; 1 Peter 4: 16.)
3. Newness of costume. (Gal. 3: 27.)
4. A different spirit—the spirit of adoption. (Rom. 8: 15, 16.) The spirit of gratitude, of freedom, of understanding, of assurance, etc.
5. Newness of relationship. The adopted calls upon God as "Father." God's children are his brethren. The Father's house is his house.



CONSOLING KNOWLEDGE

Rom. 8: 28

The knowledge of some things brings grief and tears—anything but consolation; but the knowledge of divine providence, as stated in the text, is a source of joy and consolation to the children of God. In the apostle's language are five related thoughts, which may be stated.

- I. *Universality*: "All things." How very inclusive the expression! Nothing is left outside the circle. All the various forces and experiences, pleasant and unpleasant, which touch life are comprehended.
- II. *Harmony*: "Work together."
 1. The forces in nature which seems to be in bitter conflict with each other are, in reality, working in harmony. It takes the heat and the cold, sunshine and rain, storm and calm, light and darkness to make the mighty oak. Sunshine and rain work together in making the beautiful rainbow.
 2. The experiences of life which, seemingly, are in bitter conflict are, in reality, working in harmony. Sickness and health, laughter and tears, all are working together to make life what it ought to be. From the calm and the storm come strength for wavering souls. (See 2 Cor. 4: 17; James 1: 12.)
- III. *Beneficence*: "For good." If life were all one round of pleasure, it would kill; if it were all sorrow, it would crush; but when the pleasures and sorrows are properly mixed by the great Chemist, they do not kill but cure. The highest good is to be conformed into the image of God's Son. (Rom. 8: 29.) All things which touch life work together to make us like the Christ.
- IV. *Confidence*: "We know." Said a great leader: "If you want to be distracted, look around; if you want to be discouraged, look within; if you want to be happy, look up." Let us look up with full assurance of faith, "having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience: and having our bodies washed with pure water." (See 2 Cor. 5: 1; 2 Tim. 1: 12.)
- V. *A reservation*: "To them that love God." The supreme good can be attained only by those people with rightly directed affections. (Mark 12: 30.) Such love will transform all circumstances into a blessing. But love can be expressed only in obedience. (John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3.) Therefore, all things work together for good for the people

who are obedient. (Matt. 7: 21; Heb. 5: 8, 9; Rev. 22: 14.) Reverse the text. Every positive has a negative. If the positive is true, the negative also is true. If "all things work together for good to them that *love* God," it is just as true that all things work together for *evil* to them *that do not love* God." All the forces and elements and experiences of human life, of whatever kind they may be, combine to crush the man who does not love God, or obey him.



ZEAL AND KNOWLEDGE

Rom. 10: 1, 2

We shall consider:

I. *Zeal.*

1. Defined: Literally, heat; "ardor in the pursuit of anything; ardent and active interest; enthusiasm; fervor." —Webster.
2. Zeal for God enjoined. (Rev. 3: 19.)

II. *Knowledge.*

1. Defined: In a religious sense, it means a clear understanding or perception of the will or the word of God.
2. The attainment of such knowledge is enjoined. (2 Peter 1: 5; Eph. 5: 17.)

III. *Zeal without knowledge.* This is heat without light, activity without guidance.

1. Examples of it:
 - (a) The Jewish nation. (Rom. 10: 1, 2.)
 - (b) Simon Peter. (Matt. 26: 51, 52.)
 - (c) Saul of Tarsus. (Acts 22: 3, 4; Phil. 3: 6.)
 - (d) Present day religionists manifest a lot of zeal, but often no knowledge.
2. Danger of it. Saul's zeal wrought havoc with the church. (Acts 8: 3.) Israel, though zealous toward God, was unsaved. Those who run in the dark run to their own destruction. (Matt. 15: 14.)

IV. *Knowledge without zeal.* This is light without heat, understanding without activity, faith without works.

1. Examples of it:
 - (a) The Christians in Sardis. They had heard and received God's word, but were dead—without activity. (Rev. 3: 1-3.)
 - (b) The Galatians. At first they were devoted Christians; but they lost their ardor. (Gal. 5: 7.)
 - (c) Many present day Christians.
 2. Danger of it. It is a sinful state. (Jas. 4: 17.) It brings condemnation, the punishment of many stripes. (Luke 12: 47, 48; Amos 6: 1; John 3: 19.)
- V. *Zeal and Knowledge*. This is light and heat, understanding and activity. This is the ideal state.
1. Examples of it:
 - (a) Paul the Christian. (Phil. 3: 13, 14.)
 - (b) The disciples in Jerusalem. (Acts 2: 41, 42.)
 - (c) Christians of our day.
 2. The blessedness of it. A crown of righteousness. (2 Tim. 4: 6-8.) A crown of life. (Rev. 2: 10.) A garland of victory. (Heb. 12: 1-3.)



THE CHRISTIAN SACRIFICE

Rom. 12: 1

Observe:

- I. *The apostle's approach*: "I beseech you, brethren." "Beseech" (be-seek) means to beg, to implore, to supplicate. With Paul this was a favorite word. (See Acts 26: 3; 1 Cor. 4: 16; 2 Cor. 5: 20; 10: 1; Eph. 4: 1.) Yet, he did not omit the severities. Like Jesus, he was both gentle and severe, depending on the disposition of the man with whom he had to deal. (See Acts 13: 8-11.)
- II. *The motive to which he appealed*: "By the mercies of God." He seems to say, "God has been gracious to us; now, let us return that love." (See 1 John 4: 19.) He who serves God from a grateful heart makes the best servant. This is true because he is actuated by the highest motive—a motive stripped of all selfishness.

III. *The sacrifice required: "Your bodies."* The apostle makes a distinction between "you" and "your bodies." The body is the instrument by which all human service is rendered to God. (Rom. 6: 12, 13, 19b.) This includes every member—

1. The eyes. The lust of the eyes must be stifled. The eyes must be employed in reading the Bible, in surveying God's works.
2. The ears. The ears must be "swift to hear" the voice of instruction, to turn away from temptation, slander, flattery, etc. (See Acts 12: 22, 23.)
3. The tongue. A powerful instrument for good or for evil. (See Eph. 4: 29; Col. 4: 6.)
4. The hands. Not as instruments of mischief, but of mercy should they be employed. (Eph. 4: 28.)
5. The feet. They should carry the body to places where service can be rendered. (Matt. 25: 36.)

IV. *The characteristics of this sacrifice.*

1. "Living." Under Moses' law, dead sacrifices were offered. (Lev. 1, 7.) But when the Lamb of God was offered, all dead sacrifices were swept from the altar. Now, the redeemed are to offer living sacrifices. Life comes from God (Acts 17: 28); it is right, therefore, that it should be given to him. "Living sacrifice" also means a continual sacrifice.
2. "Holy." Under Moses' law the sacrifices were without spot and blemish. (Lev. 22: 20-24.) The Lamb of God was without blemish of sin. (1 Peter 1: 19.) So, should we present our bodies. (Jas. 1: 27b; Eph. 5: 27.)
3. "Spiritual." This means, "belonging to the reason." Under Moses' law, irrational victims were offered; their wills were not consulted. When Jesus, the rational victim, was offered, all irrational sacrifices were swept from the altar. (See John 10: 17, 18.) Under the reign of Christ, the sacrifice is of rational beings—a sacrifice which involves every faculty of the mind—the intellect, the affections, the will.

Such a sacrifice is "acceptable" or well-pleasing to God, the Father. The odor of the burnt sacrifices under Moses' law

was pleasing to him. (Ex. 29: 18-25.) The offering of the Lamb was an odor of sweet smell. (Eph. 5: 2.) If our sacrifice is living and holy and spiritual, God will be pleased.

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THE POWER OF LOVE

Rom. 12: 20, 21

Of all the forces in the universe, love is the most powerful. More powerful is it than physical force, than sarcasm, than rebuke, than argument. We shall consider its power from three angles.

- I. *The power of love on ourselves.* Every emotion, good or bad, that we experience reacts upon us.
 1. The man we hate suffers as a result of our hatred, but not to the degree that we suffer. We cannot hurt a brother without hurting ourselves. Hatred is a mental poison, which destroys the finest qualities of the soul.
 2. The man we love is blessed by our love, but not to the degree that we are blessed. (See Acts 20: 35.) We cannot help a fellowman without helping ourselves. Though our love may fail to touch the enemy's heart, it is never in vain. It purifies (Rom. 13: 8-10); it makes us more like God (Matt. 5: 44, 45; 1 John 4: 8); it fits us for heaven.

- II. *The power of love on our fellows.* When others become aware of our love, happy results follow.
 1. It overcomes. Love disarms the foe, hushes the cynic, puts to shame the enemy. When drastic methods fail, as they always do, love wins. (Prov. 15: 1)
 2. It draws them. (Jer. 31: 3; John 12: 32) While hatred drives people from us, love draws them to us.
 3. It binds them. Love not only draws; it also binds people to us. It is the cement, the bond. (Col. 2: 2; 3: 14) It is the element that preserves the unity of God's people.
 4. It ennobles. It encourages. It makes life worth living. The love of one person will cause a man to desire to live.

- III. *The power of love on God.* Love causes the great Spiritual Force in the universe to operate in our favor. It reaches up and takes hold of the throne of the Almighty and moves it.

1. In the loving heart, God takes up his abode. (John 14:23)
2. By deeds of love, the divine memory is refreshed. (Heb. 6: 10)
3. For those who love him, God makes all things work together for good. (Rom. 8: 28)

Though we are weak, a mighty force is within our grasp. Let us take it and use it—not selfishly: for when the element of selfishness enters, it ceases to be love. Life is sweeter, the circle of our influence is wider, and we are more powerful when love motivates us. Love makes us kings in our realm. (Gal. 5: 6.)



THE CHRISTIAN CONFLICT

Rom. 12: 21

This is a strong little verse. In it the apostle Paul points out three things.

- I. *The Christian's foe.* It is "evil." It is not an illusion, but a grim reality. We are painfully aware of the fact that, all about us, there is a force acting at variance with all that we love and hold dear in life. Let us describe this foe.
 1. It is powerful. Unless we are fortified, it will overcome us. Hence, the apostle's warning. (1 Cor. 10: 12.)
 2. It is not a flesh-and-blood enemy, but a spiritual one. (Eph. 6: 10-12.)
 3. It takes variable forms: In evil thoughts (Matt. 9: 4); in evil words (Titus 3:2); in evil deeds (Col. 1:21).
- II. *The Christian's attitude toward the foe.* We may assume one of four different attitudes:
 1. The indifferent attitude, trying to ignore it. This is suicidal.
 2. The fatalistic attitude, allowing evil to have its way in our hearts and lives. This also is suicidal.
 3. The compromising attitude, which is tantamount to surrender.
 4. The militant attitude. This is the Christian's attitude. He abhors evil. (Rom. 12: 9.) He guards against evil. (Matt. 26: 41.) He also overcomes evil.

III. *The Christian's weapon.*

1. Not retaliation. (Rom. 12: 17, 19.) We cannot heal one wound by inflicting another. Evil has never been vanquished by evil. (Jas. 1: 20.)
2. Not denunciation. Denunciation of evil has its place, but it has never overcome evil. We cannot heal the world merely by finding its faults and condemning them.
3. Not legislation. Just laws are needful, but they have never eliminated a single evil. They can only restrain.
4. Not physical force. (Matt. 5: 39.) Physical force has its place in "the powers that be," but it has never changed a sinful heart. It can only subdue the body. (See 2 Cor. 10: 4.)
5. But it is "good" or benevolence. Of all weapons, this is the most powerful. It is God's weapon. (John 3: 16; Rom. 1: 16; Acts 10: 38.) It should be the weapon of God's people. Error is overcome with truth, curses with blessings, cruelty with kindness, wrath with a soft answer, sensuality with purity.
6. When we meet evil with evil, we only intensify it; we lose. When we meet evil with good, we conquer it; we win. (See Rom. 12: 20.) Evil is not invincible. In comparison with the power of good, it is weak and cowardly. (See Jas. 4: 7, 8.)



OBEDIENCE TO CIVIL LAWS

Rom. 13: 1-7

In verse 1 we note the duty enjoined: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher power." In order to urge us on in the performance of this duty, the apostle assigns some reasons.

I. "*Because of the wrath.*"

1. The disobedient are punished: "They that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment."
2. The civil authority is an avenger: "But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain," etc.

II. "*Also for conscience' sake.*" They are God's institution and command: "For there is no power but of God; and the pow-

ers that be are ordained of God." Because this is true, "he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God."

- III. *They are a necessity.* They were designed to be "not a terror to good work, but to evil. Those who do good need have no fear; to the contrary they "shall have praise from the same." This is true because "he (it) is a minister of God to thee for good." Because we have the benefit and blessing of civil government, we should do nothing to disturb it, but we should preserve it and support it: "For this cause we pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing." General conclusion: "Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor."



THE LAW FULFILLED

Rom. 13: 8-10

We see here:

- I. *A sacred obligation:*
1. "Owe no man anything." Make no debt that you cannot pay; pay every debt that you make.
 2. "Save to love one another." This debt we must always be paying. It is not optional; it is imperative—it is enjoined upon us.
- II. *What a man does when he assumed the obligation of love:* "For he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law." Our Master "has summed up all our duty in one word, and that a short word and a sweet word love, the beauty and harmony of the universe."—Matthew Henry.
- III. *The proof: "For this,*
1. Thou shalt not commit adultery,
 2. Thou shalt not kill,
 3. Thou shalt not steal,
 4. Thou shalt not covet.
 5. And if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

- IV. *The nature of the love enjoined:* "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." Love will not allow us to oppress, to injure, to defile, or to offend our neighbor. It will restrain every unholy passion or impulse, and not allow us to gratify envy at the expense of his credit or reputation. Love also works on the positive side. It lends a helping hand, binds up wounds, helps to save the lost. (See Luke 10: 25-37.)

The conclusion: "Love therefore is the fulfillment of the law."



A PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

Rom. 13: 11-14

In these four verses we have a most timely lesson on sobriety and godly living needed by God's people in many places. A program for a day's work is presented, consisting of four items.

- I. *The waking hour.* That hour is the present: "Already it is time for you to awake out of sleep." The apostle speaks not of natural sleep, but the sleep of listlessness, of negligence, of carnal security. The call is urgent and imperative.
 1. Because the light has dawned: "Knowing the season." Already you have over-slept. Arise!
 2. "For now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed." The day of complete salvation is fast approaching. We hasten on to the final consummation of all things.

- II. *The working garments.* When awake and up, we must think of our working clothes. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." Notice here:
 1. What we must cast aside: "The works of darkness." These are the night-clothes, which men are ashamed to wear during the day. (See John 3: 19.)
 2. What we must put on: "The armour of light." "The armour" implies that a Christian is a soldier, that he has a battle to fight. "Of light" indicates the nature of the conflict—a conquest of righteousness. (See Eph. 6: 13-19.)

- III. *How we should walk.*
 1. Positively stated: "Let us walk becomingly, as in the day."

Let us walk as Jesus, our great example, walked—in purity, in love, in humble obedience to the Father's will.

2. Negatively stated:

(a) Not in a life of sensuality—"Reveling," "drunkenness," "chambering," "wantonness."

(b) Not in a life of hatred: "Strife and jealousy."

IV. *Wholesome provisions:*

1. The necessity enjoined: "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." In the act of baptism, we put on Christ. (Gal. 3: 26, 27.) He who puts on the Christ, puts on Christ's character—his love, his gentleness, his purity, his courage, etc. He who puts on the Christ is fully clothed and equipped; he needs nothing: for in him we are complete.
2. The luxuries forbidden: "And make not provisions for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof." Said a great commentator: "The necessities of the body must be considered, but the lusts of it must not be gratified. Natural desires must be answered, but wanton appetites must be checked and denied."

FIRST CORINTHIANS

CHRISTIAN COOPERATION

1 Cor. 3: 9; 2 Cor. 6: 1

“Co” means “with”; “operate” means “to work.” “Cooperate” means “to work with.” “Cooperation” means “the act of working conjointly.”

Christian cooperation requires:

- I. *Workers*, persons to operate. The apostle declares, “We are workers.” We were created to work. (Gen. 2: 15; Eph. 2: 10; Eccl. 9: 10.) The Father and the Son are workers. (John 5: 17; 9: 4.) This fact gives to work a wonderful dignity. We cannot fulfill our high mission in the world and attain the divine likeness without work.
- II. *Fellow-workers*. Working alone is not cooperation. It is possible for us to work and not cooperate. In the language of our text, it is made clear that we should work together, or cooperate. Cooperation is a fine art. Some never learn it; this is tragic. Others do learn it; this is fortunate. There are some three or four things that insure cooperation among men, namely:
 1. Mutual love. It is a genuine delight to work with people we love.
 2. A common understanding concerning the work to be done and the plan to be followed. Unless brethren understand each other, they cannot work together.
 3. The spirit of humility. Workers need to be willing to sacrifice personal opinion, fit into the plan, follow leadership.
- III. *The right third partner*. Paul said that we are “God’s fellow-workers” and that we are “working together with him.” We recall that Judas and the Jewish leaders worked together, but not with God. Also, that Ananias and Sapphira worked together, but not with God. (Acts 5: 1-6.) They had the wrong third partner, Satan by name. We must have a

supreme desire to do God's will, to follow the New Testament plan. The Christian brotherhood is a partnership in the world's biggest business, with the world's greatest partner, the Lord Jesus.

Examples of Cooperation

1. Moses and Aaron. (Ex. 4: 1-17.) By uniting their gifts and powers, they overcame a natural weakness and became "workers together with God." Each worker has his limitations; but when workers unite their gifts and powers they can encourage each other and attain their objective.
2. Moses, Aaron and Hur. (Ex. 17: 8-13.) Aaron and Hur would not stand by and allow Moses to bear the burden alone and the battle be lost. By working together, a weakness was overcome and victory won. The church of Christ is joined in battle—engaged in a spiritual conflict. Any leader is too weak to win by his own powers; he needs the united support of the brethren.
3. Paul, Apollos and God. (1 Cor. 3: 6:) Paul preached, sowing the seed; Apollos revived that which Paul had sown, and God was, all the while, giving the increase.



THE CHRISTIAN'S ESTATE

1 Cor. 3: 21-23

Your relation to the Christ determines your relation to all things physical or spiritual. If you belong to him, all things belong to you. If you are his servant, every thing is your servant.

I. *The ministry is yours:* "Whether Paul, or Apollos," etc. The church is not for the ministers, but the ministers are for the church.

1. To break unto you the bread of life. (Matt. 28: 19, 20.)
2. To guide you in the path of safety. (2 Tim. 4: 1, 2.)
3. To comfort you in your sorrow. (Isa. 40: 1, 2.)

II. *The world is yours.*

1. To lodge in. It provides a home for the living, a grave for the dead.
2. As a field for service. (Mark 16: 15; Gal. 6: 10.)

3. To subdue. Foes must be conquered. (1 John 2: 16.)
The world is your arena, wrestling ground, battle field.
(See Gen. 1: 28; 1 Tim. 6: 12; 1 John 5: 4; Rom. 8: 37.)
4. To use and to enjoy. Nature yields unto you her bounty.
(See Matt. 5: 5; 1 Tim. 6: 17b.)

III. *Life is yours.*

1. As a precious gift. Life is sacred. Because of its origin—it came from God. Because of its character—made in God's image. Because of its privilege—fellowship with God. Because of its high destiny—eternity with God.
2. As a period of discipline. It is the school in which you learn the fine art of self-control. (1 Cor. 9: 27.)
3. As a time of enjoyment. Happy days are yours because you live them wisely. (1 Peter 3: 10-12.)

IV. *Death is yours.* To the sinner, Death is Master, feared and dreaded. To the Christian, Death is a servant. Christ conquered death; now, you share his victory. (Rev. 1: 17, 18.)

1. To terminate every sorrow and pain. It is a refuge from the storm. (Job 3: 17; Rev. 14: 13.)
2. To fulfill your deepest desires. Death is not an enemy that bans us to regions of darkness, but an angel who wakes us, at whose touch chains fall off, and who leads us through "the iron gate that opens of its own accord" and brings us into the city. (See Matt. 25: 23; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.)

V. *Things present are yours.*

1. Redemption and forgiveness. (Col. 1: 14; 1 John 1: 9.)
2. Peace that passes understanding. (John 14: 27; Phil. 4: 7.)
3. The Spirit as your abiding guest. (Luke 11: 13; 1 Cor. 3: 16, 17.)

VI. *Things to come are yours.*

1. The coming Christ. (John 14: 1ff.)
2. The glorious resurrection. (1 Cor. 15: 51-53.)
3. The heavenly inheritance. (1 Peter 1: 3-5.)
4. God, who is, who was, and who is to come. (Rev. 1: 4.)
If God is yours, "all things are yours."

Though you are lords of the universe, you are slaves of another—"ye are Christ's." Lest you become proud of your portion, remember that, after all, you and your vast estate belong to Christ, and Christ is God's. "Wherefore let no man glory in men." Since the world and the fulness thereof are the Lord's, let us glory in him, honoring him with our hearts, bodies, substance.



PAUL'S SELF-DISCIPLINE

1 Cor. 9: 24-27

In order to have Christians to realize the danger of losing their reward, the apostle makes use of two classes of instances: First, the Grecian games. (Verse 24a.) Not that salvation comes by competition, but that all who run do not run successfully. Second, all who were baptized unto Moses did not enter Canaan. (1 Cor. 10: 1-5.)

Therefore, the admonition: "Even so run; that ye may attain." To enable us to do this, the apostle gives three directions, namely:

- I. *Be temperate.* "Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things."
 1. The runner was temperate; for a period of ten months he submitted to the rules of the trainer, exercising his limbs, controlling his eating, drinking, sleeping; this he gladly did in view of "a corruptible crown."
 2. The child of God must be temperate, submitting to the rules of the great Trainer. (See Matt. 16: 24; Col. 3: 5-11; Gal. 5: 24.) This he should gladly do in view of the "incorruptible crown."
 - (a) Self-control should be complete. The athlete who exercised self-control in eating, but not in drinking, failed in the race. The Christian needs to exercise self-control in "all things."
 - (b) Self-control must also be continuous. One day's debauch was enough to destroy weeks of training. One lapse into ungodliness will undo years of training in the Christian life.

II. *Be decided*: "I therefore so run, as not uncertainly." The runner who enters the race undecided as to the direction never wins. Progress is slow until the hour of decision, then we fly like an arrow to its mark. As runners in the race of life we need—

1. Freedom of action. (Heb. 10: 1a.)
2. Patience in well-doing. (Heb. 10: 1b.)
3. Singleness of purpose. (Heb. 10: 2.)

III. *Be effective*: "So fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body," etc. In fighting the good fight of faith, the apostle Paul made his blows count; he wasted no energy.

1. Some fight an imaginary foe; put on a sham-fight, as boxers in training. (See Matt. 23: 5-7.) But the enemy is a real one, and he is skillful. Unless we are in earnest, the fight will be lost.
2. Some fight human beings; but flesh and blood are not our real enemies. (See Eph. 6: 12.)
3. Some fight sin in other people. This is a real enemy, but another enemy should be first encountered.
4. Paul fought himself, in bringing every thought and evil inclination into subjection to the divine will. Self is the worst enemy of any man; we should pitch our battle against him. When we fight any other we are "beating the air," fighting a sham-battle. Unless we bring ourselves into bondage, we shall be rejected. Having conquered self, a man is better equipped to carry the battle to other fields of conflict.

Finally, my brethren, be temperate, be decided, be effective. God will give the victory.



THE LORD'S ATHLETE

1 Cor. 9: 25-27

Consider the Christian—

I. *As a pugilist*. (Text.) Note:

1. His discipline. He "exercises self-control in all things."
2. His antagonist: His "body"—his fleshly desires and appetites.

3. The manner of fighting: "So fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet (bruise) my body."
4. The motives by which he is impelled:
 - (a) Fear of rejection.
 - (b) Hope of victory.

II. *As a wrestler.* (Eph. 6: 12.) This figure points out:

1. The nature of the contest: A hand to hand, foot to foot encounter. The enemy attacks at close quarters.
2. The enemy: "Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities," etc.
3. The object of the contest: To press the antagonist to the ground and hold him there.

III. *As a runner.* (Heb. 12: 1, 2.) Consider how we should run:

1. Without an encumbrance. "Lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us."
 2. Patiently. "Let us run with patience." (See Heb. 10: 36.)
 3. With a forward look: "Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith," etc.
 4. Hopefully. A joy is set before us. (See 2 Tim. 4: 8.)
- As a pugilist, buffet your body. As a wrestler, grapple with your antagonist and hold him to the earth. As a runner, run the race with patience, looking unto Jesus the great example.

◆ ◆ ◆
TEMPTATION

1 Cor. 10: 12, 13

The word "temptation" means: First, that which tries or proves a person. In this sense, God tempts us. (See Gen. 22: 1.) Second, that which entices a person to do evil. In this sense, God does not tempt us. (James 1: 13, 14.) It is in the light of this meaning of the word that we shall direct our thoughts.

Temptation is a universal experience. The two great representative men (Adam and Christ) were tempted. The one was tempted in the garden and fell. (Gen. 3.) The other was tempted in the wilderness and overcame. (Matt. 4.)

We shall come to the basis of our discussion. In the language of our text we have a warning and an encouragement in our temptations.

I. *The warning*: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." When you think or assume that you are secure, you are in grave danger. The presumptuous person disarms himself and becomes an easy victim to the onslaughts of the evil one. Here, take note of two facts that add to the danger of temptations:

1. The suddenness of them. "In a moment." (Luke 4: 5.) The tempter often strikes unexpectedly, finding us unaware and unarmed.
2. The unlikeliness of them. We may fall in those points wherein we seem to be strongest. Though a meek man, Moses was overcome by anger and arrogance. Though devout, David was engulfed by animalism. Though a man of courage, Peter did a cowardly thing.

II. *Encouragement*: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." If we are warned against presumption, we should also be fortified against despair.

1. No temptation exceeds our power of resistance. This is the apostolic declaration. If the load becomes excessive, the Father will come to our rescue. (See 1 John 4: 4.)
2. There is a way of escape.
 - (a) The way of escape is the way of meditation (Psalm 119: 11), the way of prayer and watchfulness (Matt. 26: 41).
 - (b) The way of escape may be the way of flight. (See 1 Cor. 10: 14; 2 Tim. 2: 22; Gen. 39: 12.)
 - (c) The way of escape may be in a face to face conflict—we cannot always flee. (See Eph. 6: 12-19.)

In every temptation there is a twofold possibility: A curse, if we yield; a blessing, if we overcome. And there is a twofold blessedness in overcoming: We gain strength—every trial we endure fortifies us for the next; exaltation. Joseph was exalted when he overcame. (Gen. 41: 27ff.) Jesus was exalted after overcoming the world. (See James 1: 12; Rev. 3: 21.)

THE LORD'S SUPPER**1 Cor. 11: 23-34**

The death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus on the first day of the week are the fundamental facts of the gospel. (1 Cor. 15: 1-4.) Each of these facts is perpetuated in the hearts of men by an act of devotion prescribed by God's word. His suffering and death are commemorated in the observance of the Lord's supper; his burial and resurrection are symbolized in baptism; the resurrection day is celebrated in joyful worship on the Lord's day.

We are to study the Lord's supper, giving attention to the five looks of the sacred institution. When we gather around the table, we should look—

- I. *Upward*, in gratitude. "When he had given thanks," etc. The communicant should thank God for the bread and the fruit of the vine; but he should look beyond these emblems and give thanks for the wounded body and shed blood of Christ. Through the bread and the fruit of the vine he should learn to see Christ.
- II. *Backward*, in memory of the suffering Savior. "This do in remembrance of me," said Jesus. The supper is a memorial institution, designed to keep alive a precious memory in the hearts of God's children.
- III. *Outward*, declaring to the world the Savior's dying love. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death." In the observance of the supper, the disciple silently proclaims to the people of the community the Savior's death. (See Ex. 13: 8, 14.)
- IV. *Forward*, in anticipation. "Till he come." God's people are a forward looking people—a people with a wonderful future. They entertain a great expectation. They eat with their faces toward the future—the dawning day.
- V. *Inward*, in self-inspection. "Let a man prove (examine) himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup." Examination before eating. Let him ask himself—
 1. "Am I in the kingdom?" The table is there. (Luke 22: 29, 30.)

2. "Have I known the Lord? If not, how can I remember him?"
3. "Am I clean?" How unbecoming to eat with filthy hands!
4. "Have I life?" Dead men do not sit at feasts.
5. "Have I appetite?" Unless we delight in the feast, it will not profit us.
6. "Am I aware of the Lord's presence?" He is a communicant at the table with us, adding to the sweetness and joy of the feast. (Matt. 26: 29.)



"A MOST EXCELLENT WAY"

1 Cor. 13: 1-13

Outstanding faults of the Corinthian church: Sectarianism, lack of team work, the vices, toleration of the vices, abuse of the Lord's supper, etc. As the panacea for all these sins and as a necessary motive for every noble endeavor, the apostle presents the subject of love. The Bible has much to say of God's love for man, of man's love for God; but this great chapter speaks of man's love for man.

In it we see:

- I. *The supremacy of love.* (Verses 1-3.) It is greater than—
 1. Eloquence: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," etc.
 2. The gift of prophecy: "If I have the gift of prophecy, *** but have not love, I am nothing."
 3. Knowledge: "If I *** know all mysteries and all knowledge; *** but have not love, I am nothing."
 4. Faith: "If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."
 5. Alms-giving: "If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, *** but have not love, it profiteth me nothing."
 6. Sacrifice: "And if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing."
- II. *The various manifestations of it.* (Verses 4-7.) Love is the origin of all that is good, the fertile soil whence springs every virtue.
 1. Patience: "Love suffereth long"; it "is not provoked."

2. Kindness: "Love *** is kind."
 3. Generosity: "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly."
 4. Unselfishness: "Love *** seeketh not its own."
 5. Forgiveness: "Taketh not account of evil."
 6. An appreciation for that which is good: "Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth."
 7. A charitable attitude: "Beareth all things, believeth," etc. (See 1 Peter 4: 8.)
- III. *The immortality of love.* (Verses 8-12.) The age of miraculous gifts has passed: Prophecies have failed, tongues have ceased, knowledge has vanished. These gifts were "in part"—that is, partial and incomplete. As garments of the infant church, they were laid aside when the state of infancy passed; but love continues, "never faileth."
- IV. *The abiding graces.* (Verse 13.)
1. In comparison. Faith has to do with the present, hope with the future, but love is for all time. Faith connects us with God, hope connects with heaven; but love makes us like God and fits us for heaven.
 2. In contrast. Paul closes as he began, by celebrating the supremacy of love. Why is love the greatest?
 - (a) Because it is God's nature—"God is love." This cannot be said of either faith or hope.
 - (b) Because it is comprehensive. (Rom. 13: 8-10.) With love in the heart, a man will have all the graces; he will obey every divine command.
 - (c) Because love will outlast faith and hope.



THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL

1 Cor. 15: 1-8

What ever else the Christian system unfolds in the New Testament, it is first of all a record of historical facts. It is a divine revelation, an unveiling of man, a body of ethical precepts. It became a philosophy, a religious system. But it is to begin with a story of something that happened in the world, a story of primary and fundamental facts.

- I. *"That Christ died."* This the declaration of Matthew, of Mark, of Luke, of John. The fact of his death, like the fact of his life, is universally conceded. The apostle takes us back to Golgotha, to the saddest scene ever enacted upon the earth, to the darkest day in the world's history.
1. As a sacrificial victim: "For our sins." Not merely as a martyr did Jesus die, but also as an expiatory offering on account of our sins. (John 1: 29; 1 John 3: 5; Gal. 1: 4; Titus 2: 14.)
 2. As a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy: "According to the scriptures." It was not merely by the will of wicked men, but also in fulfillment of the divine plan of the ages that Christ died. (Isa. 53: 1-8; Dan. 9: 26; Psalm 22; Zech. 12: 10.)
- II. *"That he was buried."* The Lord Jesus, being human as well as divine, touched life at every point. There was no path his feet did not walk. He began as an infant at Bethlehem and ended in a tomb just outside the city of Jerusalem. In a borrowed tomb his body was buried, another comment on the depth of his humiliation.
1. In a place of beauty. The tomb was in a garden, a lovely spot fashioned by the hands of a rich man. (John 19: 38-42.)
 2. In a place of purity. It was "in a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid." (Matt. 27: 60.) He who came to the resurrection and the life was not to come in touch with the forces of corruption. (Psalm 16: 10.)
 3. In a place of security. (Matt. 27: 62-66.) To the security of the great stone already closing the door, they added a seal. To the security of the stone and of the seal they added a third—a company of Roman soldiers as a guard. But why the guard? To prevent the seal from being tampered with, to prevent the stone from being removed, to prevent the body from being taken away. The tomb was made secure against the intrusion of both friend and foe.
- III. *"That he hath been raised."* That Jesus was raised from the dead is the declaration of all four of the Evangelists. (Matt.

28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20.) "The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the best attested fact in history." —Lyman Abbott.

1. At the appointed time: "On the third day." This was in accord with his own prophecy. (Matt. 16: 21.) The day of his resurrection became the day of Christian worship. (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2; Acts 20: 7.)
2. In harmony with prophetic utterances: "According to the scriptures." The resurrection of Christ, as well as his death, was a matter of Old Testament prophecy. (Psalm 2: 7; Isa. 55: 3; Hos. 6: 2; Jonah 2: 10.)
3. Being attested by witnesses: "He appeared," etc. Six distinct appearances of the risen Christ are here mentioned. There are at least four more. Paraphrase: "The eleven saw him. James saw him. Over five hundred saw him. I saw him. Most of the five hundred are living. Examine them if you think there is fraud." For different reasons he sowed himself alive:
 - (a) That they might know the certainty of the resurrection.
 - (b) That they might declare with certainty the resurrection.
 - (c) That the world might believe with certainty the story of the resurrection and find hope in that blessed fact.



THE GLORIFIED BODY

1 Cor. 15: 35-58

Concerning the state of man after death, there are three views, namely: That death is the end of all; that only the soul survives the ordeal of death; that man—both body and soul—shall live again. The last view is the one sustained by the Bible. (See Dan. 12: 2; Acts 24: 15; I Thess. 4: 16-18.)

The resurrection body will be characterized by two things, namely:

- I. *A change.* "We shall all be changed," said Paul. The change will be instantaneous—"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." The change will be fourfold in nature:

1. From corruption to incorruption: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption." (See 1 Peter 1: 3, 4.)
2. From dishonor to glory: "It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory." (See Matt. 17: 1, 2; Phil. 3: 20, 21.)
3. From weakness to power: "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power." (See Rev. 3: 21.)
4. From a natural body to a spiritual body: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body." The natural body is the body adapted to animal life; the spiritual body adapted to the divine life.

II. *Continuity.* The same body that dies shall be raised; else, the heavenly body will be a creation, not a resurrection. A change does not destroy continuity.

1. The ugly caterpillar is changed into a beautiful butterfly; but there is continuity.
2. In the buried seed we have decomposition, transformation; yet there is continuity. The kernel of the old is embodied in the new. (See John 12: 24; 1 Cor. 15: 36.)
3. The gospel transfigures the countenance brutalized by sensuality until the face of the redeemed one beams with the beauty of holiness; but there is continuity.
4. In the transfiguration scene our Lord's careworn, grief-marred face "did shine as the sun," yet there was continuity.
5. So, in the resurrection of the just, there is a change; yet, continuity. The body of Jesus was raised. Our "mortal body" shall be changed by the Spirit. (Rom. 8: 11.) The graves shall yield them up. (John 5: 28, 29.)

In view of the marvelous change, how should we live? In joyful expectation. (Verses 51-57.) In ceaseless activity for the Lord. (Verse 58.)



DEATH TRIUMPHANT

1 Cor. 15: 55-58

These words are found in the great resurrection chapter of the New Testament. They suggest some cardinal thoughts concerning the solemn subject of death.

Let us consider:

-
- I. *The fact of death.* From the fact there is no escape. We were born to die. Long before we began to live, the sentence of death had been passed upon us. (Rom. 5: 12; Heb. 9: 27.) Here are some Biblical representations of it:
1. A man on a pale horse. (Rev. 6: 8.)
 2. Man's last enemy. (1 Cor. 15: 26.)
 3. "The king of terrors." (Job 18: 14.)
 4. Water spilt upon the ground. (2 Sam. 14: 14.)
 5. The folding of a shepherd's tent. (Isa. 38: 12a.)
 6. A thread cut by a weaver. (Isa. 38: 12b.)
- II. *The "fear of death."* (Heb. 2: 15.) The fear of death is as old as the human race, as universal as life itself. Why do men fear death? Why do they draw back from it with a shudder? Why do they make such effort to escape it?
1. Because of the love of life. We consider it our dearest possession. To it there is an instinctive cleaving. For it we fight to the last.
 2. Because it is an adventure, an untried journey. We hesitate to embark upon the unknown sea. To the living, death ever remains a mystery.
 3. Because death is a lonely experience. Men walk with us during the day, descend with us to the brink, but we are obliged to embark alone in the inscrutable darkness.
 4. Because death separates us from the people and things we dearly love. While we live, strong attachments are formed; from these we are severed by death.
 5. Because of "the sting of death." With all of the horrors mentioned, none is as painful as this. Sin hurts men while they live; it hurts them even more in death. To the dying man, the sense of guilt is a "sting."
- III. *The victory over death.* Christ is the victorious leader, the **Captain of our salvation.** With his people he shares the fruits of his victory. (Heb. 2: 14, 15.) With him we are victorious.
1. Over the loneliness of death. Through bereft of human companionship, the dying Christian is sustained by the divine presence. (Psalm 23: 4; Matt. 28: 20; Heb. 13: 5.)

2. Over "the sting" of death. From the souls of his people the sense of guilt has been removed; the debt has been cancelled, the load lifted. (Heb. 8: 12; 1 Cor. 15: 11.)
3. Over the dark confines of the tomb. (2 Tim. 1: 10; 1 Cor. 15: 51-54.)
4. Over the losses sustained by death. Though separated from earth-life, with all that it holds dear to us, we are raised from the tomb and ushered into the presence of God and the glory world. (Rev. 21: 1-4.)

In view of the marvelous victory that has been wrought, what should we be and what should we do? The apostle gives the answer: "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord."



CHRISTIAN CONSTANCY

1 Cor. 15: 58

The subject of this chapter is the resurrection of the just. The apostle proves its certainty and exhibits its glory. Having accomplished this, he makes a practical application of the subject: "Wherefore." etc.

Observe:

I. *His affectionate approach*: "My beloved brethren." These words remind us:

1. That Christians are "brethren." They have the same Father. They are members of the same family—the church. They possess the same nature.
2. That Christians are objects of love. They are "beloved" of God, of Christ, of the angels, of each other. It is this heavenly disposition that unites them. (See Col. 3: 14; 2: 2; 1 Sam. 18: 7.)

II. *The course recommended*:

1. Steadfastness: "Be ye stedfast." Be not turned aside of yourselves. Be "rooted and grounded" in your faith. (Eph. 3: 17; Col. 2: 7.) Steadfastness maintains the doctrine of the resurrection, and all New Testament doctrine. (See Prov. 23: 23; Col. 3: 15; Jude 3.)

2. *Immovableness*: "Unmovable." Be not turned aside by others. Be not moved by the fear or love of men, by the wiles of the wicked, by the devices of the devil.
 3. *Abundant work*: "Always abounding in the work of the Lord." This is the work the Lord has instructed us to do—diffusing his knowledge, extending his gospel, building up his church, etc. We must "abound" (overflow) in this work, not merely for a season, but "always."
- III. *The powerful motive assigned*: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord." In him our lives are fruitful (John 15: 4, 5), our prayers are answered (John 15: 7, we enjoy divine blessings (Eph. 1: 3; 2 Cor. 1: 20), we shall conquer death and share his glorious resurrection, we shall find peace and rest in the age to come (Rev. 14: 13.)



"CONCERNING THE COLLECTION"

1 Cor. 16: 1, 2

In the preceding chapter the apostle spoke on the great subject of the resurrection of the dead. Closely following, he speaks on the subject of giving. He passes from the one topic to the other without any sense of impropriety. He thinks of each as God's message to God's people.

We shall note:

- I. *The command*: "Lay by him in store." "Store" means "an accumulation or supply regarded as kept in reserve or ready for use." Contributions should be made at regular intervals to be used as needs arise. This command is just as plain and positive as the command to repent, etc. We should be as cautious in the observance of this command as any other. (See 2 Cor. 8: 7.)
- II. *The giver*: "Each one of you." No Christian is left out of God's blessing; therefore, no Christian is left out of the giving. The rich and poor, the young and the old, male and female, all should give.
- III. *The time of the giving*: "Upon the first day of the week." Giving should be done with regularity—with the same regularity that we observe the Lord's supper.

1. A convenient time—a time when the disciples meet. (Acts 20: 7.) The custom of meeting on the first day of the week is clearly implied in the text.
 2. An appropriate time—the resurrection day of our Lord. On that day the gift of life and immortality was bestowed. (See Matt. 28.) The day of receiving should also be a day of giving.
- IV. *The measure of giving:* “As he (we) may prosper,” i. e., according to our ability. If this principle justifies our giving less in adversity, it should impel us to give more in prosperity. Not only does the inspired expression furnish us with a measure for giving, but also a motive. God prospers us—we do not prosper ourselves. We give through a sense of gratitude. (See 2 Cor. 9: 8.) We become more liberal with our means when we count or try to count our blessings.

SECOND CORINTHIANS

THE JUDGMENT

2 Cor. 5: 10

When the question came to Daniel Webster, "What is the most serious thought you ever entertained?" the great statesman replied, "That I am a responsible being and must at last give an account to my Maker."

Concerning the judgment of the last day we shall consider:

- I. *The imperativeness of it:* "For we *must*," etc. With us some things in life are optional; but a number of things are imperative: If we enter the kingdom we must be born anew (John 3: 3); we must die (Heb. 9: 27); all must be raised from the dead (John 5: 28, 29); we must meet God in judgment.
- II. *The universality of it:* "For we must *all*," etc. "Each one of us" (Rom. 14: 12); God "will judge the world" (Acts 17:31); before the Judge "shall be gathered all the nations" (Matt. 25: 32.)
- III. *The purpose of it:*
 1. That we may be "made manifest." We are to "appear without disguise." "At the bar of Christ we must all appear in our true character."
 2. That we may receive our eternal portion: "That each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. (See Rev. 22: 12.)"
- IV. *The place of it:* "Before the judgment-seat of Christ." While on the isle of Patmos, John saw the seat or throne and described it. (Rev. 4: 1-5.)
 1. A throne of HOLINESS: "He that sat was to look upon as jasper"—a stone of sparkling whiteness. (See Isa. 6: 3.)
 2. A throne of JUSTICE: "And a sardis." The color (fiery red) denotes the terror of God's wrath. (See Ex. 19: 6; Heb. 12: 29.)

3. A throne of MERCY: "A rainbow round about the throne, like an emerald" (green). The bow reminds us of the shipwreck of the world by sin and the calm which followed. The soft, mild, restful color denotes mercy.
 4. Thus, the qualities of holiness, justice, and mercy, all combine in the judgment-throne of Christ.
- V. *The stern finality of it.* The Judge is supreme, the decisions are righteous, therefore immutable and eternal. The rewards are "eternal". (Matt. 25: 46.)
 Seeing that we are to appear before the Judge of all the earth, it behooves us to make adequate preparation. (Amos 4: 12.) Sinners can prepare through repentance and obedience in baptism. (Acts 2:38.) Christians can prepare by adding the seven graces. (2 Peter 1: 5-11.)



RECONCILIATION

2 Cor. 5: 20, 21

"Be ye reconciled to God," is the earnest admonition of the text. It carries with it two implications: First, an alienation, a broken fellowship; second, that man is the offender.

Three things are necessary to reconcile the alien sinner to God, namely:

- I. *Conviction.* The guilty must see his error; man must realize his own sinfulness. To the end that man may see his guilt and unworthiness, God has given three things:
 1. The law, a mirror. He who looks into it sees a reflection of his own imperfections. (See Rom. 7: 7-10.)
 2. The divine manifestation. He who stands in the presence of the Holy Life will soon look with contempt upon his own. (See Job 42: 5, 6; Isa. 6: 1ff.; John 1: 14; Luke 5: 1ff.)
 3. The Holy Spirit. (John 16: 7ff.) He who listens to the Spirit's message becomes convicted of his sins. (Acts 2: 37.)
- II. *A sense of dependence.* The offender needs to learn that he cannot succeed while out of harmony with the offended. While in a state of alienation, man degenerates.

1. In his moral life. When he forgets God, man sinks to the lowest moral level. (See Jer. 10: 23; Rom. 1: 21ff.)
2. In his physical nature. Immorality saps his strength and shortens the span of life. (See Ex. 20: 5; Gal. 6: 7, 8.)
3. In his mental capacity. The sins which are hurtful to the body are also hurtful to the mind. This is true because the body and the mind are so closely related.
4. In his spiritual aspirations. Living apart from his Maker, man is doomed to eternal oblivion. (See Eph. 2: 11, 12.) In order to live, man must stay in touch with the source of life. (Deut. 30: 20; Acts 17: 8.)

III. *A mediator.* A go-between; one who comes between two parties who are at variance for the purpose of reconciling them. Jesus is the mediator between God and man. (1 Tim. 2: 5.) This office he fulfills perfectly.

1. He is a friend to both parties. His divine nature ties him to God. His human nature ties him to man. (See Heb. 3: 1.) As an apostle he represents God to man; as a priest he represents man to God.
2. He presents the terms of reconciliation. (Matt. 28: 18ff; Mark 16: 15, 16; Luke 24: 46, 47.)
3. He offers a common meeting place, the church. (Eph. 2: 13-16; 1: 22, 23.) God will not meet man in sin, in the world, or in a worldly institution. Only in the church, his family, will he meet man. When man accepts the terms of reconciliation, he becomes a member of the church and makes peace with God.



THE WORK OF SORROW

2 Cor. 7: 9, 10

In the language of the text the apostle mentions two kinds of sorrows. Both are produced by sin.

I. "*Godly sorrow*"—"sorrow according to God." It is so called because—

1. It is God-like. It sees sin through God's eyes. It sees sin itself. (Psalm 51: 4; Luke 15: 18; 18: 13.)

2. It is God-wrought. (Verse 9.) (See 2 Sam. 12: 1ff.; Luke 22: 61, 62.)
3. It leads God-ward: "Worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret."

II. "*The sorrow of the world.*"

1. What it is: Grief resulting not from sin itself, but from the disagreeable consequences of sin.
 - (a) A sorrow of shame.
 - (b) A sorrow of material loss. (See Ex. 9: 27-30.)
 - (c) A sorrow of physical pain.
 - (d) A sorrow due to the loss of self-respect. (See 1 Sam. 26: 21.)
 - (e) Remorse without a change in life. (See Matt. 27: 3-5.)
2. What it does.
 - (a) It may produce temporary reformation. (See Ex. 9: 27-35.)
 - (b) It works death. It becomes a crushing weight on the soul of the sinner.

LET US REMEMBER

1. That sorrows are of two kinds: Godly sorrow, resulting from sin itself; sorrow of this world, resulting not from sin but the unpleasant consequences of sin.
2. That sorrow is of no moral value in itself. It is of value only when it brings certain results. Repentance is the Divine aim of all sorrow. (Luke 15: 11ff.)
3. That repentance is not sorrow, or godly sorrow; but a change produced by godly sorrow. The change is inward, though known only by outward manifestations. (See Matt. 3: 8.)
4. The series of causes and effects:
 - (a) Godly sorrow; repentance; salvation.
 - (b) Sorrow of the world; temporary reformation; death.



LIBERALITY IN GIVING

2 Cor. 8: 1-7

Note the occasion which called forth the language of the apostle. The brethren in Judea were in destitute circumstances, and the

brethren in Corinth were able to help them. In order to induce them to do so, Paul called their attention to the example of the Macedonians. Money, as such, has no character. For this reason it is not mentioned by the apostle. He called their liberality a "grace," a service, a blessing. When properly used, money is a blessing, a "grace of God."

The brethren in Macedonia gave—

- I. "*According to their power.*" (See Deut. 16: 17; 1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.) This has always been God's plan for his people.
- II. "*Beyond their power.*" Their "power," or ability was small. Wars and persecutions had depleted their material substances. (See 1 Thess. 1: 6; 2: 14.) They might have said to the apostle, "There is no use in coming to us, begging for money. We are a set of poor folks. Instead of helping others, we need to be helped by others." But out of the furnace of affliction and "deep poverty" flowed generosity. (Verse 2.) Hardships had burned selfishness out of their lives.
- III. "*Of their own accord.*" Paul did not have to urge them to give; they urged Paul to accept their gift. (Verse 4.)
- IV. "*Beyond human prudence.*" (Verse 5a.) When Paul arrived on the scene and surveyed the situation, he did not expect much from them; but they exceeded his expectation.
- V. "*With completeness.*" (Verse 5b.) God of old asked for Isaac, but wanted Abraham. In the offering of Isaac, Abraham really offered himself. God asks for our money, but he wants us. When we give as the Macedonians gave, we offer ourselves.

The Corinthians were urged to be as eminent in giving as they were in other graces. (Verses 6, 7.) Every point in character should be exercised and cultivated. When some points are developed and others neglected, a blemish appears in Christian character.

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"THIS GRACE ALSO"

2 Cor. 8: 7

Every point of Christian character should be thoroughly developed. There should be no neglect or omission of any. The aim

of Christian training should be an all-round, harmonious, proportionate completion of life.

There are monstrosities in natural bodies: A withered arm on a strong body; a small head on a large body, etc. Likewise, there are monstrosities in the characters of men. Some Christians are highly developed in some points, but sadly undeveloped in other points—the Ephesians (Rev. 2: 2-4), the Corinthians (text).

In the text we see:

- I. *A commendation*: “Ye abound (excel, or overflow) in everything,
 1. In faith.
 2. And utterance,
 3. And knowledge,
 4. And in all earnestness,
 5. And in your love to us.”

- II. *An admonition*: “See that ye abound in this grace also.” Be as eminent in the grace of giving as you are in the other graces. If Christian character becomes proportionate, this grace must be developed along with the other graces. Now, let us notice how this can be done:
 1. By giving systematically: “Upon the first day of the week.” (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.)
 2. By giving according to ability: “As he may prosper.”
 3. By giving according to purpose: “According as he hath purposed in his heart.” (2 Cor. 9: 7.)
 4. By giving cheerfully: “not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”



THE FRUIT OF LIBERALITY

2 Cor. 9: 6-15

“The quality of mercy is not strain’d
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest:
It blesses him that gives and him that takes.”

- I. *Giving blesses him that gives*. “What you give you lose,” says the selfish soul. “What you give you invest, you sow,” says the Lord. (See Acts 20: 7.) When you give according

to the divine plan, you receive back the gift with multiplied interest. The giver is blessed—

1. With returns in proportion to the gift. (Verse 6.) The more generous the gift, the richer will be the return. When you stint your seed for sowing, you stint your harvest; when you sow with generous hand, you increase your harvest. Be not afraid to sow bountifully; be afraid not to sow bountifully.
2. With a fuller measure of divine love. (Verse 7.) God himself is a cheerful giver. There is no grudging in his benevolence. In the cheerful giver, he sees his own reflection. (See Matt. 5: 7.)
3. With more power to give. (Verses 8-11.) If we really wish to be liberal, God will give us ability to be liberal. Behind the generous soul is a great Reserve. (See Prov. 11: 24, 25.) An old epitaph has truth in it:—
“Here lies a man, men thought him mad;
The more he gave the more he had.”
4. With a fuller life. Instead of losing when we give, we make room in the heart for something better. Giving enlarges the affections of the giver, making him more like the Master, fitting him for heaven.

II. *Giving blesses him that takes.* Through the liberality of God comes every good and perfect gift. (Jas. 1: 17.) Through the gift of Jesus of himself, we enjoy the hope of eternal life. (John 3: 16; 2 Cor. 8: 9.) Let us ask, What does liberality do for others?

1. Provides temporal relief—“fillet up the measure of the wants of the saints.” It fills empty stomachs; hushes the sorrows of the distressed; heals the wounds of the afflicted.
2. Awakens in their hearts the grace of gratitude. (Verses 11, 12.) It revives the spirit, as well as the body. The generosity of the saints often causes sinners to turn to the Saviour.
3. Unites them with the giver. (Verses 13, 14.) Until this time the Jewish brethren doubted the conversion and spirituality of the Corinthians; but the gift from the Corinthians erased that doubt. Confidence replaced suspicion; love took the place of hatred.

With the apostle Paul we exclaim: "Thanks be to God for for his unspeakable gift"—the gift of his precious Son, which includes all inferior gifts.



GOD'S UNSPEAKABLE GIFT

2 Cor. 9: 15

All of God's gifts are good. (Jas. 1: 17.) But there is one gift which surpasses them all—the gift of his Son. The Father did not put up his Son for sale. He was not given to be withdrawn—his gifts are not without repentance. (Rom. 11: 29.) Christ was not loaned, but given—given for all time. He was given as a teacher, as an example of life, as a sacrifice for sin, as a mediator to intercede for us, as a king to reign over us.

- I. *An unmerited gift.* We, the recipients, are unworthy of it. Observe the striking contrast between the gift and the recipients. Jesus is holy, wise, loving, powerful; man is wicked, ungrateful. (See Psalm 8: 4; 14: 3; Isa. 64: 6.)
- II. *A voluntary gift.* Often we present gifts because we are forced to do so, or because others give to us. But Jesus was a voluntary gift:
 1. On the part of the Father. God was not forced to make the offering. He did not give with the hope of returns.
 2. On the part of the Son. (John 10: 18; Gal. 1: 4; Eph. 5:25; 1 Tim. 2: 6; Titus 2: 14.)
- III. *A precious gift.*
 1. Precious to the Father—not his servant, but his "only begotten Son."
 2. The Son's offering was precious. He gave himself—his life and blood.
 3. He is precious to the believer. (1 Peter 2: 7.) He is "the bright, the morning star," "the rose of Sharon," "the lily of the valley," "the chief among ten thousand." His value is too great for expression—the "unspeakable gift."
- IV. *A gift of love.* It was love that prompted the gift. "God so loved the world that he gave." We cannot measure the

depths of the little word "so"! "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5: 8.)

V. *A comprehensive gift.* It includes all other gifts—all that we need in time and in eternity. All that we need we find in Jesus. (See 1 Cor. 1: 30; Rom. 8: 32; Eph. 1: 3.) Jesus is the bread of life, the water of life, the way, the truth, the life, the resurrection and the life, etc. (See John 1: 4; 10: 10.) In him we have life, pardon, peace that passeth understanding, joy unspeakable and full of glory, victory over the grave and the happiness of heaven.

He who refuses this gift sustains a great loss. The condition of receiving this gift is faith—an active faith (Gal. 5: 6), an obedient faith (Jas. 2: 26, 27.)

GALATIANS

“IN CHRIST JESUS”

Gal. 3: 26-29

The man who is in Christ Jesus is in his body. This is self-evident. The man who is in his body is in his church. This is true because the body of Christ and the church are identical. (Eph. 1: 22, 23.)

In Christ Jesus—

- I. *We are sons of God*: “Ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus.”
- II. *We are adorned with his righteousness*: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did *put on Christ*.”
- III. *There are no distinctions*: “There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, that can be no male and female.”
- IV. *We are a united people*: “For ye all are one man in Christ Jesus.”
- V. *We are a hopeful people*: “And if ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.”



THE COMING OF CHRIST

Gal. 4: 4-7

These verses point out:

- I. *The season of his coming*: “When the fulness of time came.” A year earlier would have been too early; a year later would have been too late.
 1. In the *fulness* of prophecy.
 - (a) In the last days. (Isa. 2: 2; Joel 2: 28.)
 - (b) Before Judah ceased to be a ruling tribe. (Gen. 49: 10.)
 - (c) While the temple was yet standing. (Mal. 3: 1; Hag. 2: 7.)

- (d) The exact time. (Dan. 9: 25.)
2. In the *fulness* of expectancy.
 - (a) Among the Jewish people. (Luke 2: 25, 36-38; Matt. 2: 4-6.)
 - (b) Among the Samaritans. (John 4: 25.)
 - (c) Among the Gentiles. (Matt. 2: 1-3.) Virgil, a Roman poet.
 3. In the *fulness* of necessity. Corruption was universal. (Rom. 1: 21-32; 3: 23.) All human remedies had failed: Jewish morality; Greek culture; Roman law; pagan religion.
 4. In the *fulness* of preparation. After a race had been prepared; after the law had served as a school-master; after the Scripture had been disseminated throughout the nations of earth.
 5. When political conditions were ripe. Universal peace reigned. The Roman Empire was world-wide—no national boundaries to hinder the messengers of the Cross.

II. *The conditions of his coming:*

1. In divine nature: "God sent forth his Son." Jesus came in the power, the wisdom, and in the goodness of God. (See Rom. 1: 3, 4.)
2. In human nature: "Born of a woman." He was not created, like Adam. Like us in all things, but sin. A "Son of man"—the representative man.
3. Under a legal system: "Under the law." He was born under the law, was subject to the law, died under the law, fulfilled the law.

III. *The design of his coming:*

1. "That he might redeem them that were under the law"—the Jews. They could not keep the law; therefore, it was a curse to them. By his death, he removed it. (Col. 2: 14.)
2. "That we might receive the adoption of sons." Sonship comes not by nature, or merit, or legal right, but by God's grace. (See 1 John 3: 1.) Adoption involves—
 - (a) The spirit of adoption—the spirit of freedom, of

prayer—"crying, Abba, Father." (See Matt. 26: 39ff.)

- (b) Divine heirship. (Verse 7.) The child inherits the Father's estate. (See Rom. 8: 17.)



WORKS OF THE FLESH

Gal. 5: 19-21

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest," i. e., offensively visible. Like a seed buried in the earth, sin can be concealed only for a season. Committed at first in secret, sin eventually works its way to the surface. The evil thought will betray itself in action. (See Jas. 1: 15; Matt. 15: 18, 19.)

They supply a shameful catalog. In the text, fifteen sins are enumerated. These may be grouped into four classes.

I. *Sins of impurity.*

1. "Fornication." The prostitution of the physical nature which Jesus wore, which he claims for the temple of the Spirit, which he will raise to share his immortality. (See 1 Cor. 6: 18-20.)
2. "Uncleanness." Includes whatever is evil in thought, word, look, gesture, dress, etc.
3. "Lasciviousness." This is uncleanness open, bold, shameless; the flagrant breaches of public decency. The last word in sensuality.

II. *Sins of irreligion.*

1. "Idolatry." Forgetting that man was made in the image of God, people make gods "in the likeness of the image of corruptible man." Associated with sensuality. (1 Cor. 10: 6-8.) When man disowns his Maker, he loses respect for himself—he prostitutes his nature. (See Col. 3: 5.)
2. "Sorcery." The employment of evil spirits in the service of man. A Christian should trust God, not a witch or a fortune-teller for the future. (See 2 Cor. 5: 7.)

III. *Sins against love.*

1. "Enmities." Private hatred, family feuds, a deep-seated ill-will.

2. "Strife." Enmity at work. Church strife arises not so much from differences in doctrine or in judgment as from personal dislike.
3. "Jealousies." A feeling of resentment toward a rival for the sake of one's own advantage.
4. "Wraths." Rages or passionate outbursts which attend strife, etc.
5. "Factions." The spirit of factious partisanship; brother arrayed against brother.
6. "Divisions, parties." The first is the lighter, the second the more aggravated form of division—divisions organized into parties. They picture a state of the church resulting from strife, etc. (See Jas. 3: 16.)
7. "Envyings." Grudging to another some advantage or favor or honor. "Love envies not."

IV. *Sins of intemperance.*

1. "Drunkenness." The practice of seeking pleasure through intoxicants. Self-indulgence. A remnant of heathendom.
2. "Revelling." Also rendered "carousing." Defined as "jovial festivity with music and dancing." It is associated with drunkenness. (1 Peter 4: 3.)
3. "And such like." Includes gluttony, the excessive use of that which is good.

Note what they entail: "They that practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." This warning should be often repeated. Paul did so. (See 1 Cor. 5: 11; 6: 9, 10; Eph. 5: 5.)

Exclusion from heaven is man's own act. It is self-exclusion. Sin persisted in brings eternal ruin. If man desires to place the blame, let him place it upon himself.



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Gal. 5: 22, 23

The Christian is a Spirit-filled man. (1 Cor. 6: 19.) The Spirit in him will bear fruit, find expression in life. This fruit is in direct contrast with "the works of the flesh." Note the introductory word, 'but.'

Like a tree, man is known by his fruit. (Matt. 7: 16-18.) In the language of our text we have the fruit by which a Christian is known.

- I. "*Love*," the leader of the band of graces. Paul had just paraded the sins of hatred—"enmity, strife," etc. Now, he introduces the beautiful queen who puts them to shame. This grace beams forth from the father. (1 John 4: 9, 10.) Man reflects the rays back to the Father and to his fellows. (1 John 4: 11, 19.) A cold heart is dead; this is as true of the spiritual heart as it is of the physical heart. (See 1 John 3: 14; 4: 8.) Love is the fertile soil whence springs every virtue. Finding love, we may expect the other graces.
- II. "*Joy*," the beaming face, the elastic step, the singing voice of Christian character. It is "one of those birds of paradise which, when man fell, was about to fly back to its native heaven, but God caught it in the silken nets of promise, and retained it to sing in the cage of a broken and contrite heart." The fruit of joy comes when we abide in the vine. (John 15: 1-11.) This grace depends on love—it dwells in love's house. Into the cold, cruel heart Christian joy never enters.
- III. "*Peace*," a bequest of Jesus (John 14: 27; Eph. 2: 14; Rom. 5: 1). It is the holy calm breathed into the soul by a pardoning God. "The works of the flesh" disturb the tranquility of the soul. (Isa. 58: 20, 21.) But when the flesh "with its passions and lusts thereof" are crucified, a peace which "passeth all understanding" fills the soul. This peace is threefold in nature: Upward to God; outward to man, inward in one's own heart.
- IV. "*Longsuffering*." The soul at peace with God has patience with man. (See 1 Cor. 13: 4a.) This virtue enables us to endure injury, to meet opposition without provocation. It is the broad shoulder on which Christian goodness "beareth all things."
- V. "*Kindness*," an offspring of love. (1 Cor. 13: 4b.) Longsuffering is passive, kindness active. Longsuffering is self-contained, kindness busy. Longsuffering endures evil, kindness overcomes evil. It returns blessing for cursing, good for evil. (Rom. 12: 20, 21.)

- VI. "*Goodness*," the twin sister of kindness. Goodness is more affluent, more universal in its bounty. It is the generous, open hand of charity. It thinks of the gift—how to enlarge it. Kindness thinks of the recipient—helps to help him along the way. How wonderful when the two meet and blend in the same soul!
- VII. "*Faithfulness*." This is trustfulness, confidence in the brotherhood. (See 1 Cor. 13:7; 1 Peter 2: 17.) The faith that ties us to God in turn joins us to God's children. "Have faith in God," said Jesus. "Have faith in God's children," said an apostle of Jesus. He who blindly confides in every one and he who doubts every one are alike deceived.
- VIII. "*Meekness*," a child of humility. It has to do with our bearing toward others. It is self-repression in view of the claims and needs of others. It takes the inevitable without complaint. It is the antidote of "strife" and such like.
- IX. "*Self-control*," the antithesis of drunkenness, revellings, fornication and such things. Self-mastery. A general term which should be applied to the entire man—his thoughts, tongue, temper, foot, hand, eye, passions," etc. (See 1 Cor. 9: 27; Rom. 14: 21.)
- The apostle concludes by saying, "against such there is no law." There is no law to violate, no law to condemn, no law to enslave.
- "The works of the flesh" shut the door of heaven against the men who practice them—"they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." But the gate of the city of God is open to all who bear "the fruit of the Spirit."



THE MINISTRY OF RESTORING

Gal. 6: 1, 2

Restore: To re-establish; to reinstate; to bring back; to revive; to heal; to mend. In Matt. 4: 21, the Greek word translated "mending" may also be translated "restoring." The fishermen by the sea were "restoring" their nets, fitting them for usefulness.

The mission of the Lord Jesus was to restore in man the image of God, to reinstate him in divine favor, to heal his wounded soul,

to mend his broken life; and, by so doing, to fit him for usefulness. This purpose was typified by the miracles he wrought: for he restored sight to blind eyes (Matt. 20), hearing to deaf ears (Mark 7), power of speech to dumb lips (Matt. 9), strength to withered limbs (Matt. 12.)

The same beneficent purpose is seen in the parables he uttered. He would restore the lost coin to the woman, the wandering sheep to the good shepherd, the prodigal son to the father. (Luke 15.)

The disciples of the Lord are to lend themselves to the same worthy work. His mission is our mission, his task our task. We are not to bruise or to break or to crush, but to heal, to revive, to mend, to restore life to the fallen brother; thus, fitting him for service in the kingdom.

Let us consider:

I. *The one to be restored.*

1. A dislocated member of Christ's body. Because he is dislocated, he cannot properly function. He is a pain to himself, a pain to the body.
2. A transgressor. His trespass is not imaginary or supposed, but actual; he has been "overtaken"—caught, detected.
3. A burdened brother. This describes the results of his trespass. Because he has sinned, he bears the burden of shame, of remorse, of a guilty conscience. If not removed, the weight will crush him.

II. *The instrument.*

1. The "brethren," members of the same family, children of the same Father.
2. Spiritually minded brethren. "Ye who are spiritual," etc. (See Rom. 15:1.) The carnal cannot restore the carnal; the weak cannot strengthen the weak; the fallen cannot lift the fallen.
3. God works through his people his worthy purpose to accomplish among men.

III. *The method of restoring.*

1. In sympathy toward the fallen: "In the spirit of gentleness." As a kind physician restores a dislocated limb

to its position in the natural body. Drastic movements are forbidden.

2. With apprehensions toward self: "Looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted." The self-righteous attitude is not allowed. (Gal. 6: 3.) Your position and that of your erring brother may soon be reversed. (See 1 Cor. 10: 12.)

By restoring your brother, you bear his burdens; when you bear his burden, you fulfill the law of Christ, which is the law of love. The great work of Christ was and is to mend broken lives. When we give ourselves to the same noble work, we become fellow-workers of Christ and partakers of his likeness.



BURDEN BEARING

Gal. 6: 1-5; Psalms 55: 22

Many are the burdens that fall upon us along the way of life. Some of these are light; others are heavy. Some we can bear alone; others we cannot bear without assistance. Our lesson has to do with the important theme of burden bearing. There are three aspects of the subject: Self-assistance; mutual assistance; and divine assistance.

I. *Self-assistance*: "Each man shall bear his own burden."

1. Christianity is a religion of the individual. It lays a burden upon the man. (See Acts 2: 38; 1 Cor. 16: 2; 2 Tim. 2: 19; Phil. 2: 12; Rom. 14: 12.)
2. Many people refuse to accept the responsibilities of life. They are parasites. They endeavor to unload their burdens on others. When they sin, they charge it to heredity or environment. (See Luke 15: 21; 22: 54-62.)
3. By accepting his responsibility, a man grows. He becomes stronger beneath his burden. When he takes his talent and uses it, it multiplies in his hand.

- II. *Mutual assistance*: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." There are some burdens we cannot bear alone. We often need help of a brother. We should share one another's blessings, also bear one another's burdens. The brotherhood is like an arch, with each brother a stone. Let us ask—

1. What are these burdens? Their trespasses; their infirmities. (Rom. 15: 1.) You make your brother's burdens your own.
2. How should they be borne? By restoring the brother. This should be done with sympathy toward him and apprehensions toward ourselves.
3. What is the object in view? To "fulfil the law of Christ," which is the law of love. (Mark 12: 31.) Christ, our grand example. (Rom. 15: 1-3.)

III. *Divine assistance*: "Cast thy burden upon Jehovah, and he will sustain thee." We note here—

1. The burden. What is it? The burden we cannot bear, and which our brethren cannot bear for us; the burden of guilt, of doubt, of fear, of bereavement, of death.
2. The burden bearer. Who is he? The Lord, our friendly Porter. (1 Peter 5: 7.) It is in simple trust and resignation that we cast our burden upon him.
3. The assurance. What is it? "He will sustain thee." He will give you rest. (Matt. 11: 28, 29.) He is able to do for us what no other person can do.

By his own example, the Master makes the lesson more meaningful. During the days of his flesh, he accepted his individual responsibility; at times he turned to his brethren; often he turned to the Father. (See Matt. 26: 36-46.)

For all who follow this three fold rule, in the light of the Savior's own experience, the heavy burdens of life are lifted. Far better for us to follow the threefold rule than to be crushed for time and eternity.



INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Gal. 6: 5

Since the beginning of time, man has been reluctant to accept his measure of personal responsibility. He has been trying to cast his burden upon the shoulder of another. (See Gen. 3: 12.) The word of God places man's responsibility where it really belongs—upon a man's own shoulder. The duties of life cannot be performed by proxy. God does not deal with humanity as a group; he deals with the man.

In the great Book we learn—

- I. *That each man is responsible for his own sins.* (Ezek. 18: 1-4; Luke 15: 21.)
- II. *That primary obedience to the gospel is a personal duty.* (John 3: 3, 5; Acts 2: 37, 38.)
- III. *That each Christian must work out his own salvation.* (Phil. 2: 12; Matt. 25: 14-30.)
- IV. *That the giving of our means is an individual obligation.* (1 Cor. 16: 1, 2.) God blesses "every one;" therefore "every one" should give.
- V. *That each child of God must keep his own garment pure and spotless.* (2 Tim. 2: 19; James 1: 27.)
- VI. *That if a man sins, he must "bear his own burden" of guilt.* If Achan sins, Achan is guilty, Achan will be found, and if Achan does not repent he will perish. (Joshua 7; Luke 13: 3.)
- VII. *That in the day of judgment, each man must answer for himself.* (Matt. 22: 11; Rom. 14: 12.) Even his bosom companion cannot answer for him.
- VIII. *That the Rewarder shall "render to each man according as his work is."* (Rev. 22: 12; 2 Tim. 4: 7, 8.)

We cannot hide ourselves in our predecessors, in our companions, in the vastness of humanity now living. We cannot escape in the community or the congregation, large or small. In the day of judgment, we will not be overlooked among the nations assembled.

Let us, therefore, not try to lay our duties at the door of another.

Let us accept manfully our measure of responsibility. (1 Cor. 16: 13.)

Let us execute it with the strength that God gives.

Work as if everything depended on your efforts; shine as if every thing depended on your shining; give as if all things depended on your giving; pray as if all depended on your prayers; attend each meeting as if all things depended on your attendance; preach as if the salvation of the world depended on your preaching.

SOWING AND REAPING

Gal. 6: 6-10

There is an analogy between things natural and things spiritual. They bear the impress of the same divine hand. Natural laws are the types and shadows of spiritual laws. How very true is this of the law stated in verses 7 and 8! The apostle's language justifies four cardinal statements, namely:

- I. *We are sowing.* This is true of all men. We are sowing "at every step." Thoughts, words and silent deeds are the seed. There are two fields for sowing.
 1. Unto the flesh—spending our lives in doing the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5: 19-21.)
 2. Unto the Spirit—living under the guiding influence of the Spirit. It is a life of "well doing." (Verses 9, 10.)
- II. *Sowing, we shall reap.* A seed is a prophecy of a harvest, a sower of a reaper. Life is action and reaction. The boomerang returns to the thrower, the deed to the doer. Our works, like our shadows, are determined to follow us. A man and his deeds are identical. (See 2 Cor. 5: 10.)
- III. *Sowing, we shall reap what we sow.* The harvest corresponds to the sowing. This is a universal law. The offspring resembles the parent whether it be of men, of animals, plants, of deeds.
 1. Sowing to the flesh yields a harvest of "corruption"—moral decay and dissolution of man's being. He who pampers his flesh brings decay to his soul. Hell is sin rotten ripe. (See Luke 16: 19ff.)
 2. Sowing to the Spirit yields a harvest of "eternal life." Man is blessed by his good deeds.
- IV. *Sowing, we shall reap more than we sow.* We reap what we sow in kind, but not in quantity. Men reap "thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold."
 1. Of noxious seed. An evil deed has power to multiply sorrow and shame in our lives and in the lives of others. (See Rom. 5: 12; 1 Cor. 5: 6; 15: 33.)
 2. Of good seed. A righteous deed has the power to multi-

ply love and joy in our lives and in the lives of others.
(See Rom. 6: 23.)

A great educator said: "We sow a thought and reap a deed; we sow a deed and reap a habit; we sow a habit and reap a character; we sow a character and reap a destiny."



OPPORTUNITY

Gal. 6: 10

Meaning: Something either in front of the door **or just** outside the harbor. This presents two pictures: First, a veiled figure standing at the door knocking, ready to depart if no answer comes; second, a ship in the harbor ready to depart and just a moment to board her.

Opportuntiy, with treasure-laden hands, appears at every man's door. The question of the hour is, What do men do with her?

I. *Some abuse her.*

1. Saul. Opportunity came to him as an unexpected guest. He went in search of beasts and found a kingdom. (1 Sam. 9—10:1.) He proved unworthy. He took that which God had given and used it to serve his own pride. (1 Sam. 13: 14.) He who murdered his opportunity was himself murdered. (1 Sam. 31.)
2. Judas. Called to the apostleship. (Mark 3: 14.) Might have been one of the twelve foundations! But he abused his opportunity (Psalm 41: 9), then killed himself. He who abused his opportunity died in despair. A grim reminder for us all.

II. *Some slight her.*

1. The Jews at Antioch. (Acts 13: 44-46.) Opportunities slighted are withdrawn and pass on to others—"we turn to the Gentiles."
2. Felix. (Acts 24: 24, 25.) He delayed in answering the call. And while he delayed she passed on in darkness never to return.
3. Agrippa. (Acts 26: 27-29.) Almost persuaded, yet he did not admit her—she passed on. He who does not

answer when opportunity calls will call in vain for opportunity. (Prov. 1: 24ff.)

III. *Some admit her.*

1. Israel at the Red Sea. (Ex. 14, 15.) In the crisis, opportunity came, providing a way of escape. They accepted and were saved; then they "sang the sweet song of deliverance."
2. Lydia. (Acts 16: 13-15.) Opportunity came when the preachers came with the word. Lydia opened the door and the blessing of salvation was laid at her feet.
3. The jailor. (Acts 16: 25-34.) When he admitted her, joy entered his house. He who admits opportunity also admits salvation, joy and hope.

IV. *Some seek her.*

1. Philip. (Acts 8: 26ff.) "~~Arise~~—and go—and he arose and went." As he went he looked for opportunity. He made an opportunity for another.
2. The Greeks. (John 12: 20, 21.) All should seek Jesus, the most valuable treasure. (See Matt. 13: 45.)
3. Cornelius. (Acts 10.) He did not wait for opportunity to knock at his door; he went in search for her. He found her and was happy.

You are encompassed by the enemy of sin; but for you Jesus lived, died, conquered the grave, and provided a way of escape. You have an opportunity. Do not abuse her. Do not slight her. Why not admit her and accept her bounty?

EPHESIANS

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Eph. 1: 22, 23

The church in an organism—a thing breathing and throbbing with life. Christ is the head; each Christian is a member. (1 Cor. 12: 12, 13.) The purpose of the church is to keep Christ in the world.

You are interested in the well-being of your natural body; in like manner, Christ is interested in the well-being of his spiritual body. What kind of a body does Christ want his body to be?

- I. *A united body.* Who wants the members of his body to be divided, warring against each other? A divided body is a weak body; it cannot long survive. (See Matt. 12: 25.) As members of the church, we should be united with Christ and with each other. For the unity of his people Jesus earnestly prayed. (John 17: 20, 21.) What are some indications of unity?
 1. Peace. (See Rom. 14: 19; 1 Thess. 5: 13b; Heb. 12: 14; Gal. 5: 15.)
 2. Cooperation. (1 Cor. 3: 9; 1 Cor. 6: 1.) The elders should plan the work according to God's will; we should work that plan.
 3. Sympathy. (See 1 Cor. 12: 26.) Lack of sympathy is an indication of division.
- II. *A healthy body.* A sickly body is painful, impotent, inefficient. Who wants a diseased body? Christ does not want a sin-diseased body, a sin-corrupted body. You strive for the health of your natural body; even so Christ strives for the health of his spiritual body. And how?
 1. By inoculation. The word is the preventive which we should hide in our hearts. (Psa. 119: 11; John 15: 3; Col. 3: 16.)

2. By ceaseless activity. How very important is work in the promotion of health! (See 1 Peter 1: 22; 1 John 1: 7.)
3. By amputation. The Lord wants those members who are hopelessly diseased severed from the body to the end that the body may live and thrive. (See Rom. 16: 17; 2 Thess. 3: 6.)

III. *A body adorned with loveliness.* We endeavor to drape our bodies with garments that are attractive. And we endeavor to drape every member of the body—not just a few. The Lord wants his body draped with garments of righteousness. (See 1 Tim. 2: 9, 10; Rev. 19: 8.) When Christ presents his righteous church before the Father, he will not be ashamed of her. (Eph. 5: 25-27.)

Christ is the savior of the body, the church. (Eph. 5: 23.) He is the savior of the united church, the healthy church, the church adorned with garments of beauty.

Why not become a member of the church and enjoy the salvation of the Lord? (Gal. 3: 26, 27.)



SEVEN WALKS OF THE EPHESIANS

The word “walk” denotes activity; more than that, it denotes continuous activity. In Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, the figurative use of walking for living, or carrying on our life, is employed seven times. Let us note them.

- I. *Walking in disobedience:* “And you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.” (2: 1, 2.)
- II. *Walking in good works:* “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared that we should walk in them.” (2: 10.)
- III. *Walking worthily:* “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuf-

fering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (4: 1-3.)

IV. *Walking in vanity*: "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also walked, in the vanity of their minds." (4: 17.)

V. *Walking in love*: "Walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell." (5: 2.)

VI. *Walking as children of light*: "For ye were once darkness, but are now light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (5: 8.)

VII. *Walking in wisdom*: "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (5: 15, 16.)



THEN AND NOW

Eph. 2: 11-22

The first part of our text refers to what the Ephesians were prior to their conversion; the second part to what they became after conversion.

I. *What they were*. (Verses 11, 12.)

1. Christless: "Separated from Christ." They were far away from him, having no part in him. The blessings of Christ were to them unknown. (See Eph. 1: 3.)

2. Without fellowship: "Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel." They had no fellowship with God's chosen people. Between the Jews and Gentiles stood a barrier.

3. Hopeless:

(a) "Strangers from the covenants of promise." (See Gen. 22: 17, 18; Gal. 3: 16.)

(b) "Having no hope." Where there is no promise, there can be no hope. Without the Savior, there is no hope of salvation, of the heavenly inheritance.

4. Godless: "Without God in the world." With gods innumerable, the Gentiles were without the true God. (See Acts 14: 15.)

II. *What they became.* (Verses 13-22.) When Paul preached in the city of Ephesus, many of the Ephesians believed and obeyed the gospel. (See Acts 19.) This brought about a marvelous change in their lives. The expression "but now" in verse 13 is set in contrast with "once ye" in verse 11.

1. Reconciled to Christ. No longer were they separated from Christ. When they learned of the love of the Lord for them, they became his friends. This reconciliation took place in the church, Christ's spiritual body. (Verse 16.)
2. Fellow-citizens with the saints. No longer were they alienated from God's people. When they became reconciled to Christ, they became reconciled to Christ's people. Oneness with Christ means oneness with the followers of Christ.
3. Children of hope: "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," etc. A firm foundation creates hope in the hearts of men.
4. A habitation of God. (Verses 21, 22.) No longer without God in the world. Instead of dwelling in a temple made with hands, God dwelt in the people themselves. In verses 11 and 12 we have a picture of every responsible person who has not obeyed the gospel of the Lord Jesus. In verses 13-22 we have a different picture—the picture of every person who hears, believes and obeys the gospel.



PAUL'S FOURFOLD PRAYER

Eph. 3: 14-21

Note:

- I. *His humble attitude:* "For this cause I bow my knees."
- II. *To whom he prayed:* "Unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named."
- III. *For whom he prayed:* "That he would grant you"—the saints in Ephesus. This an intercessory prayer, marked with unselfishness.
- IV. *The petitions presented:*
 1. "That ye may be strengthened."

- (a) The measure: "According to the riches of his glory."
 - (b) The nature: "With (his) power." Not muscular, but spiritual power.
 - (c) The medium: "Through his Spirit."
 - (d) The recipient: "In the inward man."
2. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts."
 - (a) The guest: "Christ."
 - (b) The dwelling place: "Your hearts."
 - (c) The door: "Through faith."
 3. "That ye may know the love of Christ." The more we know of his love, the greater will be our love for man.
 - (a) "The breadth" of it—it includes all nations.
 - (b) The "length" of it—eternal in duration.
 - (c) The "height" of it—it uplifts, ennobles.
 - (d) The "depth" of it—it reaches down to the vilest.
 4. "That ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." The heart, like the vacuum, will be filled with something. How important it is that it be filled with God—his goodness, wisdom, love, truth!

V. *The outburst of praise.* (Verses 20, 21).

1. He speaks of God's power to bless. (Verse 20.)
2. He ascribes unto him glory. (Verse 21.) Since grace comes from God, it is fitting that we should give glory unto him.



LOVE IN FOUR DIMENSIONS

Eph. 3: 18; John 3: 16

Consider very thoughtfully:

- I. *The breadth of it:* "God so loved the world"—the world of people. (Rom. 5: 12.) His love embraces—
 1. Every race. God is "the God of all." (2 Cor. 5: 14; Matt. 28: 19.) In Christ Jesus "there can be neither Jew nor Greek." (Gal. 3: 28.) Man's love is narrow, extending only to his race or his own kindred.
 2. All social classes. It is not said that God "so loved the rich, the powerful, or the highly educated that he gave,"

but "the world." In Christ Jesus "there can be neither bond nor free." Men often confine their love to a particular party, a small circle.

3. Male and female. In Christ Jesus "there can be no male and female." Time was when people thought that woman was excluded from God's grace.

II. *The length of it.* Love is God's nature. (1 John 4: 8.) It is, therefore, endless. It can be measured only by eternity.

1. It extends to the eternal past. This is seen in the creation, preservation and redemption of man. (See Psalm 90: 1; Rev. 13: 8; Matt. 25: 34.)
2. It is clearly evident in the present. It is seen in what it endures. Justice says that we are unworthy to live, but infinite mercy spares us. (2 Peter 3: 9.) It is seen in what God's bestows. (Jas. 1: 17.) He allows his blessings to flow even to the rebellious. (Matt. 5: 45.) How very unlike our love!
3. It reaches to the eternal future. It is immutable. (Rom. 8: 38, 39; Rev. 7: 13-17.)

III. *The height of it.* This is seen in the lofty purposes it creates. God so loved us that he might save us and give us eternal life. (See 2 Cor. 5: 14.)

1. To be the object of love is either a blessing or a curse, depending on the elevation of the love that loves us. God's love is a blessing because of its high and holy nature.
2. God loved us that he might restrain us, that he might lift us up to himself and his heavenly abode.

IV. *The depth of it.* "God so loved." How very deep is the word "so"! How low and degraded is the human race! Yet, divine love reaches the vilest sinner. We can, in a measure, fathom it by what it does.

1. It gives. Divine love might have been written in golden letters in the skies or proclaimed by a messenger from heaven, but neither would have cost anything nor revealed the depth of divine compassion. Love is best understood

- in terms of suffering, or a sacrifice; so, the supreme sacrifice was made. God gave his Son!
2. It condescends. Stooped and became incarnate. Reached down and lifted. Jesus was more deeply concerned in serving and saving man than in saving his own reputation. (Phil. 2: 7, 8.)
 3. It suffers. (Rom. 5: 6-8.) Not merely for the flower of manhood or womanhood; not merely for unstained childhood; but also for the "ungodly" did Jesus die. No wonder Paul said that the love of Christ "passeth knowledge."
 4. It forgives. Both the alien and the backslider. A greater love is required to forgive the latter than the former. A deeper love is required to reclaim a prodigal wife than to woo and wed her. When we obey the primary commands of the gospel, we are joined to Christ in spiritual wedlock; when we backslide we commit spiritual fornication; yet the Lord continues to love us and, on our return, will receive us. (Isa. 1: 18; 55: 6, 7.)

CONCLUSION

1. God is our Father, bestowing upon us perfect, pure, disinterested love. His love is as broad as the world, as long as eternity, as deep as sin and misery, as high as heaven.
2. May our hearts respond to that love. It is only in a life of obedience that our love for God can find expression. (See John 14: 15; 1 John 5: 3.) It is only when love meets love, or responds to love, that real happiness can come.
3. Be afraid of the great love that loves you: It is either your heaven or your hell—your heaven if you respond to it, your hell if you spurn it.



DIVINE ABILITY

Eph. 3: 20

God is wise. God is good. God is also powerful. The seven verses which follow tell us something of his power.

"He is able"—

I. *To do more than we can ask or even think:* "Now unto him

that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." (Text.) (See 1 Kings 3: 4-14.)

- II. *To make all grace abound unto you:* "God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency is everything, may abound in every good work." (2 Cor. 9: 8.)
- III. *To succor them that are tempted:* "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." (Heb. 2: 18.)
- IV. *To save to the uttermost:* "Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercessions for them." (Heb. 7: 25.)
- V. *To guard your soul:* "I know him whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim. 1: 12.)
- VI. *To change our bodies:* "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." (Phil. 3: 21.)
- VII. *Te set us before the presence of his glory:* "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy." (Jude 24.)
- Being wise, he knows our needs and how to supply them. Being good he delights to supply them. Being powerful, he is able to supply them. "Believe ye that I am able to do this? Yea, Lord." "According to your faith, be it unto you." It is through faith that we appropriate the power of the Lord to ourselves.



UNDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Eph. 4: 4-6

The greatest need of the modern world is undenominational Christianity—Christianity minus denominational marks, minus

the party spirit, minus the traditions of men. The spirit of religious partyism is a menace to Christianity and defeats the purpose of God, who wants his people to be united. The proper basis of undenominational Christianity is found in the New Testament—in the seven fundamental unities mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

He reminds us that there is :

- I. *One body, or church*: for the church and body of Christ are identical. (Eph. 1: 22, 23.) While on earth, Jesus had one natural body; now, he has one spiritual body. We are urged to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4: 3.)
- II. *One Spirit, which is the Holy Spirit*. The Spirit animates the body. The body without the Spirit is dead. And the Lord cares nothing for a corpse.
- III. *One hope, or aspiration*. The heavenly home is the one goal toward which the members of one body are, or should be moving. This hope quickens the step, gives sparkle to the eye, fills the soul with joyful expectation.
- IV. *One Lord, the Christ*. All authority both in heaven and on earth has been given unto him. (Matt. 28: 18.) This leaves no authority in the realm of religion for the preacher, the council, the pope, the priest.
- V. *One faith, or creed*. This creed is Christ and his teaching. The addition of man-made creeds of the system of faith causes division among the followers of the Christ.
- VI. *One baptism, which is immersion into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. All professed Christians, regardless of party affiliation, agree that immersion is Biblical; but sprinkling or pouring for baptism is a source of disturbance or division in the religious world.
- VII. *One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all his people*. He is the one grand Object of our worship and devotion, for it is in him that we live, and move, and have our being. We should worship him in spirit and in truth.

There is *one body*
 Animated by *one Spirit*,
 Comforted by *one blessed hope*,
One Head, to which all Christians are united by
One faith, and
One baptism, and
One God, the Supreme Power and Source of all blessings.

The golden chain of unity is composed of seven links. Christ's body is at one end, God the Father at the other. The two are connected by the five links between. When every link is preserved, the chain is strong; it cannot be broken. When only one link is broken, the golden chain falls apart: for a chain cannot be stronger than its weakest link.



THE DIGNITY OF WORK

Eph. 4: 28

Here we learn :

- I. *That a man should not steal*: "Let him that stole steal no more." Stealing is the taking and carrying away of another's property without his knowledge or consent; it relates to every unfair, unjust, dishonest method by which one person may transfer to himself the goods of another. The prohibition implies and presupposes individual rights and private properties.
- II. *That a man should work*: "But rather let him labor." The command to labor is implied in the prohibition to steal. If it is wrong for a man to live at the expense of others, he must live at his own expense. As long as a man is able to make his own living, it is wrong for him to live on charity. The command to work is universal; it applies to the rich as well as to the poor.
- III. *That a man's work or calling should be honorable*: "Working with his hands the thing that is good." A calling in which a man enriches himself at the loss of others is dishonorable; such a calling is theft refined. Gambling is an evil for the reason that it is unprofitable. The successful gambler gains

at the loss of the unsuccessful. In all of your trading or transactions, see to it that the other fellow does not lose by the transactions.

- IV. *That a man should work that he may give:* "That he may have whereof to give to him that hath not." Our labors should be motivated by the desire to help others as well as ourselves. The desire to provide an honest living for ourselves and the comforts of life for our unfortunate neighbors should move us in our activities day by day. All that we do should be done in love. (Gal. 5: 6.)



CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE

Eph. 5: 22-33

Christ and the church are united. They are one and inseparable. Very strong and intimate is the relationship. Christ is the church's lover. The church is married to Christ. (Rom. 7: 4.) They are joined in spiritual wedlock.

We shall consider:

I. *What Christ does for his bride.*

1. For her he gave himself. (See Gen. 2: 21-23; Acts 20: 28; Titus 2: 14.)
2. Upon her he bestows his tender affection. (1 John 3: 1.)
He left the Father's bosom to woo her. (Gen. 2: 24.)
3. He sanctifies her. Before the marriage, the bride passes through the bath of purification. (Eph. 5: 26; 1 Cor. 6: 11.)
4. For her he provides. He "nourisheth and cherisheth" her. With her he shares his treasures. Unto her he says: "All that is mine is thine."
 - (a) He provides food. (John 6: 48.)
 - (b) He provides raiment. He found her when she was unlovely and adorned her with loveliness. (Isa. 61: 10; Gal. 3: 27.)
 - (c) He provides shelter in the storm. (Psalm 46: 1; 91: 1.)
5. Unto her he is faithful and true. (Heb. 13: 5, 6.) He

allows nothing except the unfaithfulness of the bride to sever the tie. (See Matt. 19: 6; John 10: 28, 29.)

6. At last, he will lead her before the Father and present her unto him. (Eph. 5: 27.) Then she shall eat with him the marriage supper of the Lamb. (Rev. 19: 1.)

II. *What the bride should do for Christ.*

1. Unto his tender affection she should respond. Love should meet love. (See 1 John 4: 19.) He is the "fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely."
2. Make herself attractive—"not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." "She should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure." (Rev. 19: 8.)
3. Honor him by wearing his name. The name Christian honors Christ. (See 1 Peter 4: 16; Rom. 16: 16.) When the bride refuses to wear the name of the bridegroom or when she wears the name of another, she dishonors the bridegroom.
4. For him alone, she should keep herself. The bride should be true to the marriage vow of chastity, keeping herself free from spiritual adultery. (Hos. 4: 15; 1 John 5: 21.)
5. Unto him she should render loving obedience. (Eph. 5: 22, 23.) The woman was made of man and for man; hence her subjection to him. The church was made of Christ and for Christ; hence her subjection to him. Obedience is the test of love and loyalty. (John 14: 15.)

Consider well what the Lord has done and is doing for the church. Is the church responsive? Is the church a loyal and loving bride? What are we, as individual members, doing to make the church acceptable to the Lord?



"MEMBERS OF HIS BODY"

Eph. 5: 30

While Jesus was upon the earth, he had a natural body. Like the bodies of other men, his body had members—eyes, ears, hands, feet, etc. During the days of his flesh, the Master had a great work to accomplish; for the accomplishment of this work,

he relied upon the instrumentality of the members of his body. In fact, he did not work apart from the members of his body. Every time a noble deed was wrought, he called into action his hands, his tongue, his feet, or some other member.

In Matthew, Mark, Luke and John we read of his crucifixion, his burial, his resurrection, and his glorious ascension to the Father's right hand, after which time the disciples saw his body no more. The natural body of Jesus cannot be found, no matter how diligently you may search.

And yet, as strange as it may seem, the New Testament frequently refers to the body of Christ as a living, breathing, moving organism among men in the present age. What is the body of Christ, to which the New Testament so frequently refers? It is the church. The body of Christ and the church are identical. (Eph. 1: 22, 23.) And the apostle Paul declares that "we are members of his body."

And what does this mean? It means that we are to function for the Lord, doing the work that he would have done. The Lord is still working in the sinful world, not in some miraculous or mysterious manner, but through the instrumentality of the members of his body. He is working through those people who give their heart and hand to noble service. A tremendous responsibility has fallen upon us, as members of his body. If we neglect our duty, the Lord's work goes neglected. If Christ's people fail, Christ's cause will fail.

- I. *Since ye are members of his body, we are the eyes of the Lord.* As the eyes of the Lord, let us survey the wide harvest field, let us be on the alert for opportunities. (See John 4: 35.)
- II. *Since we are members of his body, we are the ears of the Lord.* As the ears of the Lord, let us give heed to his word; let us listen to the cry of lost humanity—the cry from another community, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."
- III. *Since we are members of his body, we are the tongue of the Lord.* As the tongue of the Lord, let us praise him for his goodness, call upon him during days of distress, and pro-

claim his message of salvation to men in darkness. (See Mark 16: 15, 16.)

IV. *Since we are members of his body, we must be the shoulders of the Lord.* As the shoulders of the Lord, there are burdens for us to bear. (See Gal. 6: 1, 2.) We are to lift the fallen, to encourage the weak, to bear patiently with all men. But we cannot bear one another's burden and, at the same time, maintain the self-righteous attitude of the ancient Pharisee, the "I-am-holier-than-thou" attitude.

V. *Since we are members of his body, we are the arms and the hands of our Lord.* As the arms of the Lord we may encircle the children, shielding them from the snares of Satan, bringing them up in the nurture and in the admonition of the Lord. As the hands of Christ, let us be pure and clean—free from malice, free from sensuality. And may we be open hands, ready to lift, ready to minister to unfortunate people.

VI. *Since we are members of his body, we are the feet of the Lord.* As the feet of Christ, let us run errands for him; let us go where he wants us to go, and do what he wants us to do. We can find inspiration from a prophet of old who, when he heard the voice, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us" responded, "Lord, here am I. Send me." Like Jesus our great example, let us go about doing good. (Acts 10: 38.)

Though no two members of the Lord's body are alike, and though no two of them perform the same function, yet may we all work together to the end that the Father's will may be done in our community as it is done in heaven. Just as the members of Jesus' natural body were responsive to his will, even so may we be responsive to the will of the glorified Lord, the head of the body or the church.

PHILIPPIANS

THE FOURFOLD SECRET OF SUCCESS

Phil. 3: 13, 14

In these verses Paul is revealing the secret of his great life, telling us what made him the kind of man he was. We shall make a study of the fourfold secret of his success.

- I. *A sense of personal unworthiness*: "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold." Though a most eminent saint, he was painfully aware of his own weakness. (See Rom. 7: 18.) Personal improvement is impossible to the man *who* does not see his mistakes and mourn over them.
- II. *Singleness of purpose*: "This one thing I do." He did not say, "These three things, or these two things I do," but "this one thing I do."
 1. The rays of the sun, when diffused are relatively impotent; but, if focused, would burn the world. Steam, when diffused, is powerless; but when concentrated moves the giant locomotive.
 2. Likewise, there is power in the concentration of purpose. (See Jer. 29: 13; Matt. 22: 37; Phil. 1: 21.) On the other hand, a divided life is a weak life—at the mercy of circumstances. (Matt. 6: 24; Jas. 1: 8; Luke 8: 14.)
- III. *Oblivion of the past*: "Forgetting the things which are behind." The runner has no time to cast his eyes over his shoulder to mark the steps already trod. If the things behind cannot make us better, they should be remembered no more. Consider the things Paul forgot:
 1. A noble ancestry. (Phil. 3: 5:) While our ancestors were heathens, worshipping gods of their own making, the apostle's ancestors were worshipping the most high God. When he became a Christian, he left kindred behind.
 2. A respectable religion. (Phil. 3: 3-6.) His religion was venerated with traditions of ancient worthies; but when the call came he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision."

3. Personal accomplishments—moral, intellectual, political. He did not allow the memory of these things to breed vanity in his soul.
4. His injuries. Think of his stripes, bruises, imprisonment, false charges, etc. He allowed none of these things to discourage him; he harbored no malice.
5. His miserable mistakes. He had persecuted God's church, etc. The memory of his sins, which had been forgiven, did not thwart his onward march.

IV. *The spirit of progress*: "I press on," etc. From the beginning, God has wanted man to move forward, hence the arrangement of the lower limbs, the position of his eyes—in front and not in the back of the head. (See Ex. 14: 15.) In the language of the apostle, two ideas are prominent:

1. Intensity: "I press on." The figure of a runner—body thrown forward, hands extended, eyes fixed on the goal.
2. Direction: "Toward the goal," etc. Movement in the wrong direction is not progress. We recall the story of the football player who ran with the ball toward the opponent's goal. Our aim is the Christ. This includes,
 - (a) Christlikeness in character.
 - (b) Christlikeness in service.
 - (c) The crown of victory, the heavenly reward. (2 Tim. 4: 6-8.)



"REJOICE IN THE LORD"

Phil. 4: 4

Note:

- I. *The command*. The apostle says, "Rejoice." God's people should be a happy people, a cheerful people. This is not optional, but imperative.
- II. *A limited command*: "In the Lord." We are not to rejoice out of the Lord, but "in the Lord"—in his body, in his presence, in his service. We are to rejoice in those things which pertain to him.
 1. In the salvation he gives. (Acts 8: 38, 39.)
 2. In the triumph of his truth. (1 Cor. 13: 6.)

3. In the fellowship he provides. (1 John 1: 3, 7.)
 4. In the hope he instills. (Rom. 12: 12; Heb. 3: 6.)
 5. In the fact that our names are written in heaven. (Luke 10: 17-20.)
- III. *A perpetual command*: "Rejoice in the Lord always." "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." (2 Cor. 6: 10.) A great man said, "He who rejoices in the Lord always rejoices."
1. Whether in prosperity or in adversity, rejoice. (Hab. 3: 17-19.)
 2. Whether among friends, or behind prison walls, rejoice. (Phil. 1: 18.) The Philippian letter was written by a prisoner; yet its dominant tone is joy.
 3. Whether in sickness or in health, rejoice. (Matt. 9: 2.)
 4. When favored by men or by them persecuted, rejoice. (Matt. 5: 11, 12; Acts 5: 41.)
 5. Whether in life or in death, rejoice.
- IV. *An emphasized command*: "Again I will say, rejoice," The repetition of the command carries with it two implications, namely:
1. That the command is important. It is worth repeating.
 2. That Christians are slow to heed it. We are often disposed to do the opposite—to whine, to fuss, to growl, to murmur.
- V. *The marvelous results*. When we keep this command, wonderful results follow, even as the day follows the night.
1. Dissension will disappear. The command to rejoice was given as a remedy for personal strife. (Phil. 4: 2-4.)
 2. Murmuring will cease—be lost in the sound of sweeter, more cheerful tones. (See 1 Cor. 10: 10.)
 3. Our health and efficiency will be preserved.
 4. Our personal attraction will be greatly enhanced. The circle of our friends will be enlarged.
 5. The Lord's church will radiate a cheerful influence. "More flies are caught by a spoon of honey than a barrel of vinegar."

"THE LORD IS AT HAND"

Phil. 4: 4-7

This little statement is found in the midst of other statements which seems to cluster about it. "At hand" means nearness, sureness, certainty.

Let us consider :

- I. *The blessed fact.* The Lord is not removed from us. That he dwells apart on a planet millions and millions of miles away is a childish idea. "Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet." (See Acts 7: 54-56; 17: 27, 28.)

"Oh, where is the sea?" the fishes cried,
 As they swam the crystal waters through;
 "We've heard from of old the ocean's tide,
 And we long to look on the waters blue.
 The wise ones speak of an infinite sea;
 Oh! who can tell us if such there be?"

—Unknown.

- II. The meaning of the fact. He is "at hand"—

1. To see us. (Prov. 15: 3; Jer. 23: 23, 24; Heb. 4: 13.)
2. To speak to us. (Rom. 10: 8.) God reveals himself in the sacred Scriptures; he who reads hears God's voice.
3. To hear us. (Psalm 116: 1; Heb. 2: 16-18; 4: 15, 16.)
4. To judge us. (2 Tim. 4: 1.) His coming may be hundreds of years in the future, yet, in view of the awfulness of the judgment, he is at hand. (See James 5: 8, 9.)

- III. *How we should live in view of the fact.*

1. In perpetual joy. "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice." (See Hab. 3: 17, 18.) Why not, since he is present to guard and to keep and to comfort?
2. In gentleness. "Let your moderation (gentleness) be known unto all men." We should be gentle in the treatment of men—our enemies, the unconverted, our debtors. The Judge is at hand; let us leave all differences for him to adjust; let us forbear wrath and retaliation.
3. Above anxious care. "In nothing be anxious." (See 1 Tim. 6: 8; Matt. 6: 25-34.) If the Father is near, why be over anxious?

4. In communion. "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." How unbecoming to remain silent when one so dear is so near! Anxiety should be turned into prayer. By making known our desires we find relief.

The grand consequences of such a course of life are seen in verse 7: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."



WHOLESOME THINKING

Phil. 4: 8

You have power to think. In this you are superior to the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea. In this you bear the image of your Maker. For God is the great Thinker, the supreme intelligence of the universe.

You have power to control your thoughts. You can exercise restraint in your intellectual life. You can control your thinking in the realm of nature, in the realm of science, in the realm of morals. You can think on things that are high and holy, or allow your thoughts to descend to things that are low and vile. But you need to remember that ability involves responsibility. The fact that you can exercise control over your thoughts makes you responsible and accountable for your thoughts. Not only must you account to the Judge for your words and deeds, but also for the thoughts you entertain, i. e., "every hidden thing." (Ecclesiastes 12: 14.)

Note:

I. *The content of wholesome thought.*

1. In the positive: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." But every positive has a negative; and if the positive is true, the negative is also true. So, we shall consider wholesome thought,
2. In the negative: Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are

false, whatsoever things are dishonorable, whatsoever things are unjust, whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are ugly, whatsoever things are of bad report; if there be any vice, and if there be any things worthy of blame think not on these things.

II. *Your thoughts issue into life.* "As he thinketh within himself, so is he." (Prov. 23: 7.) You are not what others think you are; you are not what you think you are; but what you think, you are. You are the sum-total of your thoughts.

1. If you think on things that are true, you are true; if you think on things that are honorable, you are honorable in life; if you think on things that are just, you are just in your dealings; if you think on things that are pure, you are pure in daily life; if you think on things that are lovely, you are lovely or attractive to all good people; if you think on things of good report, you become a bearer of good reports; if you think on the virtues, you become a partaker of the virtues; if you think on things worthy of praise, you become praiseworthy. You are just as good and as grand and as great as the thoughts you love and cherish.
2. But if you think on things that are false, you are false; if you think on things that are dishonorable, you are dishonorable in life; if you think on things that are unjust, you are unjust in your dealings; if you think on things that are impure, you are impure in conduct; if you think on things that are ugly, you become ugly or impulsive to fine people; if you think on things of bad report, you become a bearer of bad reports or a gossiper; if you think on the vices, you become vicious in character; if you think on things worthy of blame, you become worthy of blame. You are just as vile and as vulgar as the thoughts you love and cherish.

III. *Your manner of life determines your destiny.* Said an eminent educator: "You sow a thought and reap a deed; you sow a deed and reap a habit; you sow a habit and reap a character; you sow a character and reap a destiny." When

you control the thought, you control the word or deed; when you control the deed, you control the habit; when you control the habit, you control the character; when you control the character, you lay hold on a happy destiny.



THE SECRET OF SELF ADJUSTMENT

Phil. 4: 10-13

One of the marks of an educated man is his ability to accommodate himself to life's ever-changing conditions and circumstances. No man is able to do this for himself. He must obtain help from above.

We shall speak of—

I. *The necessity of self-adjustment.*

1. Human life is a checkered experience, filled with changes. We often pass from one extremity to another: From prosperity to adversity, and adversity to prosperity; from light to darkness, and from darkness to light; from war to peace, and from peace to war. Many of these changes are unexpected. The sudden alterations of life are more dangerous to faith than the most trying settled conditions.
2. Unless we can accommodate ourselves to these changes, we are undone. He who tries to pass from the summer to the winter of life without making adjustments is doomed to perish.

II. *An exhibition of it.*

1. Paul had passed through all climes from south to north pole of human experience. No change found him unprepared. He did not allow hardships to overcome him or prosperity to master him.
2. To the Philippians he wrote: "I know how to be abased, and I know also how to abound: in everything and in all things have I learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in want."

III. *The "secret" of it:* "I can do (bear) all things in him that strengtheneth me." In the power that Christ gave, Paul was able to meet all of life's changes. All Christians can do the same. We can find strength—

1. In the teaching of Christ. (1 John 2: 14b.)
2. In the example of Christ. (Heb. 12: 3.)
3. In the merits of his precious blood. (1 John 1: 7.)
4. In the communion with Christ:
 - (a) In prayer. (Matt. 7: 7, 8; Phil. 1: 19.)
 - (b) In the Lord's supper. (Matt. 26; 26ff.)
5. In the ministry of intercession:
 - (a) Of the Christ. (Rom. 8: 34.)
 - (b) Of the Spirit. (Rom. 8: 26.)

In the physical world we learn how to adjust ourselves to the changes that come—from heat to cold, from cold to heat, from sunshine to rain, from rain to sunshine. These changes may be sudden and severe, yet we learn how to make adjustments. Let us learn the same lesson in spiritual things.

COLOSSIANS

THE RISEN LIFE

Col. 3: 1-17

Consider :

- I. *The meaning of the risen life:* The life lived with Christ, in his spirit, on a higher level. (Verses 1-4.)
- II. *The sins which hold it down.* (Verses 5-11.)
 1. Sensuality.
 2. Greed.
 3. Bad temper.
 4. Falsehood and deceit.
 5. Snobbishness.

(The story of an old eagle found in the woods. He was unable to fly—he could only flutter. On drawing near, a trap was seen about his foot. The weight held him down. Likewise, the sins just mentioned keep us from soaring to great heights.)
- III. *The virtues which help us to rise.* (Verses 12-15.)
 1. Kindness.
 2. Humility.
 3. Considerateness.
 4. Forgiveness.
 5. Love.
 6. Thankfulness.
- IV. *The things which help us to attain these graces and to soar.* (Verses 15-17.)
 1. Setting the mind upon them: "Set your mind," etc.
 2. Letting the word dwell in our heart.
 3. Joining our brethren in spiritual worship.
 4. Doing all things in the name of the Lord.

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THE NEW CREATURE

Col. 3: 5-15

The Bible speaks of two creations. One is material, the other is spiritual in nature. Since God spoke in the beginning, bringing

into existence the heavens and the earth, no material substance has been created; but a creation takes place in the spiritual realm every time a sinner is converted to Christ.

“Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.” (2 Cor. 5: 17.) In this verse the apostle gives a two-point description of the new creature.

- I. *“The old things are passed away.”* In verses 5-11 “the old things” are enumerated.
 1. Wicked love: Fornication; uncleanness; passion; evil desire; and covetousness. The exhortation to slay these things is enforced by a fearful warning. (See verse 6.)
 2. Wicked hatred: Anger; wrath; malice; railing; shameful speaking; falsehood; and snobbishness.
- II. *“They are become new.”* In verses 12-15 we have a list of the “new” things. Let us remember that it is not enough to put off the rags of sin: new garments must be put on. What are the new garments? A heart of compassion; kindness; lowliness; meekness; longsuffering; forbearance; forgiveness; and love.



SINGING

Col. 3: 16

- I. *A Christian sings.*
 1. The creation was introduced with a song. (Job 38: 7.) To the listening ear, there is a melody in all the works of God. “There is music in the sighing of a reed; there is music in the gushing of a rill.”
 2. When the new creation dawned angels broke through the veil and were heard on the wings of song. (Luke 2: 14.) Singing is peculiar to the adherents of the Christian religion. In a heathen temple, a song is never heard. Instead, a wail and a lament.
- II. *What he sings:*
 1. Not the licentious songs of one who knows not God. Not the songs animated by the spirit of the present evil world.
 2. “Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” (Eph. 5: 19.) Songs

which draw him nearer the Lord. The Psalms were used almost exclusively in the praise service of the early church.

3. Songs that instruct: "Teaching and admonishing." (text.) Our songs, therefore, should be expressive of gospel truth. It is wrong to sing a falsehood, just as it is wrong to preach a falsehood from the pulpit.

III. *How he sings:*

1. With the sweetest melody of which his voice is capable. By so doing, he exalts the name of God among his fellows.
2. "With the spirit." His songs rise from a source deeper than the vocal cords. He makes "melody in his heart." "The heart," not a mechanical instrument, is the instrument which accompanies his voice.
3. "With the understanding." That is, with an understanding mind, concentrated thought.
4. "Unto God," the object of his praise and adoration.

IV. *Why he sings:*

1. He sings because it is his duty. (See Psalm 150: 6.) The musical faculty, as well as any other, should be employed in divine service. Yet, he who sings merely from a sense of duty sings poorly.
2. Like a bird, he sings because it is his nature to sing. He sings because he cannot keep from singing. The word dwells in his heart; he is filled with the Spirit; the song is the over-flow.
3. He has a Father whose presence permeates the universe. He has a Savior, heaven's love gift, who died to redeem him. Like the Israelites of old, he has been delivered. (See Ex. 15: 1ff.; Psalm 40: 1-3; Acts 8: 39.) His afflictions, which are momentary, work for him a rich reward. (2 Cor. 4: 17.) He has a priceless treasure laid up for him in heaven. (2 Tim. 4: 8.) For him the death monster has been conquered and the dark tomb opened. (1 Cor. 15: 55.)

Ah! sweet ministry of song! How comforting to the depressed! The melody of lovely music was heard in the beginning. Though interrupted by the tragedy of the fall, it was

heard again as the light of divine love streamed through clouds of sorrow. Even in the night season, it may now be heard. (Job 35: 10; Psalm 77: 6; Acts 16: 25.) It will be heard again in a clearer, sweeter and deeper volume in the spirit-world when the followers of Moses and of the Lamb sing in unison. (Rev. 15: 3, 4.)



THE PRECIOUS NAME

Col. 3: 17

When a young lady marries, she leaves her old name and adopts the name of her husband. She is called by his name, writes in his name, speaks in his name, transacts business in his name, honors his name.

When we became Christians, we are joined to Christ in spiritual wedlock. We left our old name and took upon ourselves the name of the Lord. Now, we wear his name; we do all of our talking and working in his name, i. e., by his authority and for his glory.

In his name—

- I. We assemble. (Matt. 18: 20.)
- II. We proclaim the word. (Luke 24: 46, 47; Acts 9: 28, 29a.)
- III. We were baptized. (Acts 2: 38.)
- IV. We baptize believers. (Matt. 28: 19, 20; Acts 10: 48.)
- V. We pray unto the Father. (John 14: 13, 14; 15: 16.)
- VI. We bow the knee and confess with the tongue. (Phil. 2:9, 10.)
- VII. We suffer persecution. (Acts 5: 41; 1 Peter 4: 14; Rev. 2: 3.)
- VIII. We glorify God. (1 Peter 4: 15, 16.)
- IX. We enjoy salvation. (Matt. 1: 21; Acts 4: 11, 12.)

FIRST THESSALONIANS

THE THREE SUPREME GRACES

1 Thess. 1: 3

The Thessalonians had lately "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." Their growth in Christian character had been remarkable. In their lives, three beautiful graces had been developed: Faith, love and hope.

The same graces are mentioned elsewhere (1 Cor. 13: 13), though in a different order. This was due to a difference in purpose. In the Corinthian letter Paul was showing the supremacy of love, so he put love last. In the Thessalonian letter he was dealing with the natural order in which the graces are developed.

Let us observe:

I. *The graces specified.*

1. Faith. This is basic and fundamental. Faith connects us with God, the Father. It is through the door of faith that Christ gains entrance into our heart. (See Eph. 3: 17.)
2. Love. Out of faith springs love. Without faith there can be no love. Faith or confidence must precede friendship. We love, because we first believed that God loved us. (See 1 John 4: 9.)
3. Hope. Out of faith and love spring hope. Hope is faith in expectancy. Hope is love in anticipation of the glory to come.

II. *The graces manifested.*

1. Faith works. Faith is not a mere idea, or mental state. It is a living, moving, breathing thing. In Heb. 11 we see the energy of faith. In the Christians of Thessalonica we have faith at work.
 - (a) In the assurance with which they had accepted the gospel. (1 Thess. 2: 13.)
 - (b) In standing firmly for the gospel in the face of bitter opposition. (1 Thess. 3: 3-7.)

- (c) In their effort to spread the gospel. (1 Thess. 1: 8.)
 - (d) In the change the gospel had wrought in their lives. (1 Thess. 1: 6, 9, 10.)
2. Love labors. Labor is more than work. It includes the idea of toil, suffering. Faith avails only when it works through love. (Gal. 5: 6.)
 3. Hope exercises patience. Through all trials and tribulations, hope complains not. It bears up under pressure. Through inscrutable darkness, it looks upward and sees a star.
 - (a) Hope expects Christ's coming. (Titus 2: 11-13.)
 - (b) Hope desires Christ's coming. (2 Tim. 4: 6-8.)
 - (c) Hope prepares for Christ's coming. (1 John 3: 3.)



SINCERITY

1 Thess. 2: 3-6

In the preaching of the apostle Paul, we see:

- I. *Sincerity in motive*: "For our exhortation is not of error, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile."
 1. In relation to the Father: "Not in error." Having received the gospel truth from God, he gave it to others in its purity.
 2. In relation to himself: "Not of uncleanness." He was pure in his affections; he was pure in his purpose.
 3. In relation to others: "Nor in guile." In his presentation of the word of God, he employed no fraudulent wiles or lying schemes.
- II. *Sincerity in speech*.
 1. He spoke with a sense of responsibility: "But even as we have been approved of God to be intrusted with the gospel, so we speak."
 2. He endeavored to please God: "Nor as pleasing men, but God who proveth our hearts."
 3. He was given to neither adulation nor deception: "For neither at any time were we found using words of flattery, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness."

- III. *Sincerity in aim.* "Not seeking glory of men, neither from you nor from others, when we might have claimed authority as apostles of Christ. . . . We were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were very dear to us."



THE DESCENSION OF THE LORD

1 Thess. 4: 16

I. *When?*

1. At the end of the age. Jesus ascended at the beginning of the Christian era; he shall descend at the end of the same. (See 1 Cor. 15: 23, 24.)
2. At the harvest of the world—when the wicked are ripe for destruction and the righteous for salvation. (See Rev. 14: 14-16.)
3. At a time unannounced. (Matt. 25: 13.) He gives no intimation of the exact time of his approach. It behooves us, therefore, to be prepared at all times.

II. *Whence?* He shall not come by way of the cradle or the cross, but suddenly and immediately "from heaven."

1. With a heavenly sign—"with the clouds." (Acts 1: 9-11; Rev. 1: 7.)
2. With heavenly power. (Mark 13: 26.) At his first coming he seemed so powerless—a babe in swaddling clothes! At the last coming he shall appear with power to execute without delay the will of the Father.
3. With heavenly glory—"in his glory." (Matt. 25: 31.) Not with a flesh and blood body, but a glorified one.
4. With heavenly attendants—"all the angels with him." (Matt. 25: 31.)

III. *Whither?*

1. To the wicked, striking terror to their hearts. (Rev. 1: 7b; 6: 15-17.)
2. To mockers, putting to silence their mockery. (2 Peter 3: 4; 1 Thess. 5: 1-3.)
3. To the indifferent, bringing upon them everlasting shame and regret. (Luke 17: 26-30).

4. To the righteous, with hands uplifted in infinite mercy. (See Luke 24: 50, 51; Acts 1: 11b.)

IV. *Why?*

1. To arouse the dead. (See text; 1 Cor. 15: 52.)
2. To separate the righteous from the wicked.
 - (a) As the fisherman separates the good from the bad fish. (Matt. 13: 47-49.) This refers to the separation within the church.
 - (b) As the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (Matt. 25: 31ff.) This refers to the general separation.
3. To assign unto each his everlasting portion. (Matt. 25: 46; Rev. 22: 12.)



THE MEETING IN THE AIR

1 Thess. 4: 16, 17

Among the words of comfort spoken by the Lord to the disciples in his farewell address was the promise, after his departure, to come again and receive them unto himself. For more than nineteen centuries the Lord's people have been looking for his coming with intense and anxious expectancy. Will he return? Are the hopes of the church doomed to disappointment? Must the bodies of the saintly dead be forever shut up in the graves of the land and of the sea? Will the wrongs they suffered ever be righted?

In the words of our text, Paul assures us of the coming of the Christ and provides some important particulars of that awesome event. Let us take a look at them.

- I. *The descent of the Lord.* He is not coming by proxy, but in the majesty of his personal presence: "The Lord himself shall descend." He shall come with signal tokens of regal power:
 1. "With a shout"—"signal-shout." The victorious King "will give the word of command to the hosts of heaven in his train for the last onslaught, at his final triumph over sin, death, and Satan (Rev. 19: 11-21), and will call the saints' bodies to life (John 5: 28, 29)."
 2. "With the voice of the archangel"—Michael, the prince of the angelic host. (Jude 9.) To him especially is committed the guardianship of God's people. (Dan. 10: 13.)

3. "And with the trump of God." Among the ancients, it was customary to summon the people with a trumpet. The trumpet blast will call together the elect, preparatory to their glorification with Christ. (Matt. 24: 31; 1 Cor. 15: 52.)
- II. *The ascent of the saints.* In response to the trumpet call, they shall rise and leave the earth. As they rise, they shall pass through a marvelous change. (1 Cor. 15: 51-53.)
1. The saintly dead shall be raised. "The dead in Christ shall rise first," i. e., before the living saints. Those who are living in the flesh shall have no advantage over the dead. (Verse 15.)
 2. The living shall be lifted. With those who have been raised, they shall be united above the earth.
- III. *The glorious meeting.* They shall "meet the Lord in the air."
1. The saved shall meet their Savior, their Redeemer. They shall see him and be like him. (1 John 3: 2; Phil. 3: 20, 21.)
 2. The place of the meeting is signified—"in the air." Up from the sin-cursed earth, out of reach of the consuming fire. (2 Peter 3: 10.) There is no Biblical evidence that Christ and his glorified people will ever touch the earth.
- IV. *The wonderful companionship:* "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." Let us ask—
1. With whom? "With the Lord." In holy association, in familiar fellowship, in rapturous communion.
 2. Where? In a place prepared by him. (John 14: 1-3.) "Designed by his genius—built up by his energy—enriched by his resources—adapted to us by his wisdom."
 3. How long? For ever. This companionship shall be unbroken and uninterrupted in a world without end.
 4. With what results? "Life forever—light forever—love forever—peace forever—rest forever—joy forever."

SECOND THESSALONIANS

THE DAY OF RECOMPENSE

2 Thess. 1: 3-10

Persecution had befallen the saints at Thessalonica. The purpose of the apostle in writing was to comfort them. This he did by commending them for their faith and love and by assuring them of the coming day of recompense.

This day is to be characterized by three things, namely:

- I. *The coming of the Judge.* (Verse 7.) "The revelation of the Lord Jesus" is another expression for his coming (1 Peter 1: 13; 4: 13), for it will exhibit aspects of his glory and majesty unknown and inconceivable before. Let us ask—
 1. Whence? "from heaven," the great spirit world to which he ascended at the close of his earthly ministry. (Luke 24: 50, 51.)
 2. With whom? "The angels of his power." (See Matt. 25: 31.) They will speedily execute his decisions and assist in the final consummation of the age. (Matt. 13: 41, 42.) An illustration of the power of one angel. (See 2 Kings 19: 35.) If one angel can slay thousands in a night, what can myriads upon myriads do?
 3. What manner? "In flaming (leaping and blazing) fire"; in dazzling brightness. Fire is a symbol of the divine presence (Ex. 3: 2; 13: 21; 19: 18); it is a representation of his glory and power to consume his foes. (Deut. 4: 24; Heb. 12: 29.)
- II. *Avengeing wrath.* (Verses 8, 9.) In these verses note:
 1. The objects of it:
 - (a) The ignorant; "Them that know not God." Those willfully ignorant, like Pharaoh who boasted, "I know not Jehovah." (Ex. 5: 2.) He does not hide himself. (Acts 17: 27, 28.) The universe is full of his witnesses. (Psalm 19; Heb. 1: 1.) So, man is without excuse. (Rom. 1: 20.)

- (b) The rebellious: "Them that obey not," etc. Those people who, having learned of the Lord, refuse to obey him; who have seen the light but refuse to work in the light. (Rom. 10: 3, 16; 2: 8.)
2. The nature of it:
- (a) "Eternal destruction." Not the loss of being, but of well-being. Matter cannot be annihilated. Can mind, which is superior to matter, be annihilated?
- (b) Banishment and separation—"from the face of the Lord," etc. To be in the presence of God is the highest state of bliss. (Psalms 16: 11; 17: 15.) The absence of God can but mean the opposite—woe, darkness, death.
- III. *A revelation of the glory of the saints.* (Verse 10.) The saints are those holy and godly people who know the Lord and are obedient to his gospel. When a man stands over a placid lake, his likeness is reflected in it; so the Lord's people, when he comes, will reflect his glory. (See 1 John 3: 2, 3.)

Friend, the gospel of Christ has facts that should be believed (1 Cor. 15: 1-8) and commands that should be obeyed (Acts 2: 37, 38). Have you obeyed the gospel? In view of the solemn warning of the text, you should obey without delay.



"WITHDRAW YOURSELVES"

2 Thess. 3: 6-15

Let us ask—

I. *From whom withdraw?*

1. The sensualist: The fornicator, the drunkard, etc.
2. The idolator—those who put the material before God in their affections. (See 2 Tim. 3: 2-4; 4: 10; Col. 3: 5.)
3. The reviler—the person who uses abusive or slanderous speech.
4. The extortioner—one who obtains by unjust methods. (See 1 Cor. 5: 9-11.)
5. The trouble-maker—the person who causes divisions. (See Prov. 6: 16-19; Psa. 133: 1; Rom. 16: 17.)
6. The idler and talebearer.

7. The disorderly. It is on condition that we walk in the light that we have fellowship with God's people. (1 John 1: 6, 7.)

II. *When withdraw?*

1. After the fact of guilt has been established. This is done by the testimony of two or three witnesses. The testimony of one man alone is insufficient. (See 1 Tim. 5: 19.)
2. After all earnest efforts to restore him have failed. (See Gal. 6: 1-3.) The act of withdrawing fellowship is the last resort.

III. *Why withdraw?*

1. For the sake of the sinful member. To fellowship a sinful member of the church is to encourage him in his way of life. To withdraw from him may put him to shame. (See 2 Thess. 3: 14.) It may create in his heart a deeper respect for the church and the pearls of God's truth. Note the brother in Corinth. (2 Cor. 2: 5ff.)
2. For the sake of the church. Evil tolerated is a leaven, working mischief in the body of Christ. Institutions are saved from disintegration by the exercise of proper discipline.

IV. *How treat the person from whom the church has withdrawn?*

Not as an enemy. He should be admonished. If and when he repents, he should be forgiven and comforted. (2 Cor. 2: 7, 8; Luke 15.)

FIRST TIMOTHY

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

1 Tim. 2: 1, 2

An intercessory prayer is a prayer sent to the throne of grace on behalf of another. Too many times the common thought of prayer is in connection with getting our own desires and wishes granted. But the noblest aspect of prayer is prayer for others.

During the days of his flesh, Jesus prayed for others. (John 17: 9, 20.) In heaven he continues to intercede. (Rom. 8: 34; Heb. 7: 25.) The Spirit makes "intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. 8: 26.) The great apostle Paul prayed for others. (Eph. 3: 14-19.)

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men"—

- I. *For our rulers*: "For kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." A prayer for our rulers promotes peace and tranquility between communities, between nations.
- II. *For our brethren*. "All for one, and one for all."
 1. For the weak that their faith fail not. (Luke 22: 31, 32.)
 2. For the sick that they may be in good health. (3 John 2.)
 3. For the elders that they may rule wisely and well. (Acts 20: 32, 36.)
 4. For the minister that he may preach God's word faithfully. (1 Thess. 5: 25.)
 5. For the broken-hearted that they may be comforted. (2 Thess. 2: 17.)
 6. For every brother that his spirit, soul and body may be preserved entire at the coming of the Lord. (1 Thess. 5: 23.)
- III. *For our enemies*. We can best deal with our enemies not by doing them injury, but by dealing kindly with them, by praying for them. (Rom. 12: 17-20; Matt. 5: 43-45.)

1. On the cross, Jesus prayed for his executioners. (Luke 23: 34.)
2. While being crushed with stones, Stephen prayed for his murderers. (Acts 7: 59.)
3. Having prayed for a man, it is difficult to do him injury of any kind.

IV. *For the lost.*

1. Abraham prayed for the wicked cities of the plains, the first recorded prayer in the Bible. (Gen. 18: 22-33.)
2. Paul prayed for the salvation of his people, Israel. (Rom. 10: 1, 2.)
3. We should pray for the lost. But, in doing so, let us remember two things:
 - (a) There is a difference between what God desires and what he wills by decree. He desires the salvation of all, but wills that they should be saved through faith and obedience. (Mark 16: 15, 16; 2 Peter 3: 9.)
 - (b) Prayer cannot change the plan of salvation or the Divine law of pardon. So, when we pray for the lost we should pray that they may be moved by God's power to render obedience to the Divine will.

From intercessory prayers great benefits come: First, to the one for whom intercessions are made. There is a blessing for him. (Jas. 5: 16b.) Second, to the intercessor. Such prayers lift a man out of himself, make him more unselfish, more joyful. (Phil. 1: 3, 4.)



JESUS, OUR MEDIATOR

1 Tim. 2: 5

A mediator is a person who comes between two parties who are at variance for the purpose of reconciling them, of promoting a better understanding. He must sustain a twofold relation—a relation to each party he mediates.

Jesus is the mediator between God and man, coming between them for the purpose of bringing about a state of reconciliation. As our mediator, he sustains a twofold relation: Apostle and High Priest. (Heb. 3: 1.)

- I. *As the Apostle (one sent), he represents God to man.* He pleads the cause of God with us. He is God's ambassador upon earth, heaven's representative among men, a messenger from a better world. He offers—
1. Light for the blind. (John 8: 12.)
 2. Pardon for the guilty. (Rom. 8: 1, 2.)
 3. Liberty for the slaves. (Rom. 6: 17, 18.)
 4. A healing balm for the sin-sick. (Matt. 9: 12.)
 5. Rest for the weary. (Matt. 11: 28-30.)
 6. Life for the dead. (John 1: 4; 10: 10; 11: 25.)
- II. *As the High Priest, he represents man to God.* He is man's ambassador in heaven, man's representative before the great tribunal. He represents his people before the Eternal—
1. In the sin offering he made. (Heb. 8: 3; 10: 4-7.)
 2. In helping them in time of temptation. (Heb. 2: 17, 18.)
 3. In bearing their petitions to the throne of grace. (Rom. 8: 34; Heb. 4: 14-16; 1 John 2: 1, 2.)

“Consider Him”

The word “consider” implies an earnest, fixed, prolonged attention of the mind. First, consider Jesus as our Apostle—the representative from heaven. His words are all-authoritative. Second, consider Jesus as our High Priest—our helper in heaven. Unto him we can go in time of trial. Third, consider him as our one and only mediator: for there is “one God, one mediator between God and man.” This eliminates the Roman pope or priest as a farce, as an imposition upon a gullible people. It is the power and privilege of every Christian to go directly to the Father, through Jesus, the one and only mediator between God and man.

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THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

1 Tim. 3: 16

This is a most comprehensive verse, an epitome of the gospel. We shall study it phrase by phrase. “Without controversy (a fact conceded by all) great is the mystery of godliness.” But this mystery has been uncovered, brought to light.

- I. *God "was manifested in the flesh."* This refers to the incarnation. (See Isa. 7: 14; Matt. 1: 23; John 1: 1, 14.) Jesus came into the world to give mankind a clearer understanding of the Father. (See John 14: 7-9.)
- II. *"Justified in the Spirit."* The flesh was the sphere of his manifestation, the Spirit of his justification. He proved himself to be God's Son—
1. By his words. (John 7: 46; Matt. 7: 28, 29.)
 2. By his works. (John 2: 11; 5: 36.)
 3. By the Father's testimony. (Matt. 3: 17; 17: 5.)
 4. By the resurrection. (Rom. 1: 3, 4.)
- III. *"Seen of angels"*—Those so near God. (See 1 Peter 1: 12.) Gabriel announced his coming (Luke 1: 26, 27); they sang the first cradle song (Luke 2: 14); ministered unto him after the temptation (Matt. 4); strengthened him in Gethsemane (Luke 22: 43); announced his resurrection (Matt. 28); and were present at his ascension (Acts 1: 11).
- IV. *"Preached unto the nations"*—those far from God. What angels learned by seeing, nations learned through preaching. He was proclaimed—
1. As the Savior. (Acts 5: 31.)
 2. As the intercessor. (Heb. 7: 25.)
 3. As the judge. (2 Cor. 5: 10.)
- V. *"Believed on in the world."* People believed because they heard the preaching. (Rom. 10: 17.) It is remarkable that one whose doctrine is opposed to falsehood, lust and greed should be believed!
1. Jews, whose heart had been filled with prejudice, embraced him. (Acts 2: 41; 5: 14; 6: 7.)
 2. Gentiles, who had been proud and lustful, accepted him. (1 Cor. 6: 9-11; Phil. 4: 22.)
- VI. *"Received up into glory."* Having finished his work upon earth, he returned to heaven where he really belonged. The Father received him. (See Ps. 24: 7.)
1. To make atonement for sin. (Heb. 9: 24-26.)
 2. To plead for his people. (Rom. 8: 34.)
 3. To rule as king. (1 Cor. 15: 24, 25.)
 4. To welcome the redeemed. (Isa. 35: 10; Rev. 7: 13-17.)

DUTIES TO THE ELDERS**1 Tim. 5: 17-22**

In practically every relationship of life there are mutual duties and responsibilities to sustain—between parent and child, husband and wife, employer and employee, brother and sister. This is also true of the elders and the congregation.

We often study the duties of the elders to the congregation; let us now make a study of the duties of the congregation to the elders.

The congregation should—

- I. *Honor them.* (Verses 17, 18.) Double respect is due them, which should find expression in material compensation on certain conditions—
 1. That they “rule well”—wisely and faithfully.
 2. That they “labor in the word and doctrine,” devoting full time to that work.
- II. *Shield them.* (Verse 19.) The reason for this is apparent: a public servant has a most difficult position to fill. If he does his duty, he will likely make enemies who may seek to destroy him. The reputation of a minister is of value, not only to himself and family, as in the case of other men, but of special value to the church. His name, therefore, should be guarded from false accusations.
- III. *Rebuke them.* (Verses 20, 21.) Those who “persist in sin” —or sin habitually—should be rebuked along with other sinful members.
 1. How? Publicly— “in the midst of all.”
 2. Why? “That the rest (other elders and members) also may fear.” The rebuke serves as an object lesson.
 3. When? Only when the guilt is established by witnesses and the guilty ones are impenitent. Decisions should be reached without prejudice, i e., without previous judgment.
- IV. *Cautiously select them.* (Verse 22.) The way to guard against scandals in the eldership is to exercise extreme caution as to the character of the candidates before making appointment. Be not partakers of other men’s sins by selecting unqualified men for elders. “Keep thyself pure”—free

from guilt in this matter. It is much easier to place a man in the eldership than it is to remove him.

- V. *Obey them.* (Heb. 13: 17.) They should be obeyed as they (the elders) obey Christ. (See 1 Cor. 11: 1.)
1. If it is God's will for the elders to rule, it is also God's will for the church members to submit to their rule.
 2. If it is God's will for them to lead, it is also his will for the church members to follow.



FLEE, FOLLOW, FIGHT

1 Tim. 6: 6-12

The Christian lives in an evil environment. Because this is true, he is admonished to be alert, active. This activity is expressed in three words: "Flee," "follow," and "fight."

- I. *Flee.* Sin is our most dangerous and deadly enemy. Our surest safety is in flight. We should flee from it as a child flees from a rattlesnake, a hungry lion. In verses 9 and 10 we are warned to flee from the love of money and its attendant evils. Its danger is expressed in three figures:
 1. A drowning man: "Such as drown men," etc.
 2. A tree. "The love of money," the root. Temptations, lusts, unbelief, sorrow, destruction, perdition, the offshoots.
 3. An entrapped animal: "Fall into a snare—pierced through with many sorrows."
- II. *Follow.* If fear is on the one hand, eagerness of desire is on the other. We are to pursue the good things of life in an effort to attain them. Life's best prizes are those which come as a result of earnest effort. Let us follow after—
 1. Righteousness—just dealings with our fellowman. (See Prov. 14: 34.)
 2. Godliness—this has to do with our relationship with God. Cultivate piety, reverence. (See Psalm 111: 9.)
 3. Faith—the root of both righteousness and godliness.
 4. Love—that by which faith works. (Gal. 5: 6; Rom. 13: 8ff.)

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5. Patience, which is needed as we pursue the other graces. (See Heb. 12: 1; Jas. 5: 7, 8.)
 6. Meekness, toward those who oppose us. (See Prov. 24: 19.)
- III. *Fight*. The figure changes from that of a runner to that
- (a) External—the world. (1 John 2: 15, 16.)
times come when we are forced to face them.
 1. Our enemy is three-fold:
 - (a) External—the world. (1 John 2: 15, 16.)
 - (b) Internal—the flesh. (Rom. 7: 21.)
 - (c) Infernal—the devil. (Gen. 3: 1; 2 Cor. 11: 14; 1 Peter 5: 8.)
 2. Because the enemy is strong, we should arm ourselves with the divine panoply. (Eph. 6: 10ff.)
 3. The object of the encounter: "Eternal life," the victor's wreath. (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8.) It is placed within our reach, not within our hand—we must "lay hold."

SECOND TIMOTHY

“GIVE DILIGENCE”

2 Tim. 2: 15

In this well-known verse the apostle points out three things of practical importance to a servant of God, namely:

- I. *The need of preparation:* “Give diligence,” or “study.” His heart and mind should be cultivated; a state of spirituality and deep devotion should be attained. There is but one way that he can do this—by a careful study of God’s word. “I don’t have time to study,” says one. To this we reply, “Take time to study, just as you take time to eat, to drink, to sleep, to work. Make Bible study a definite part of your daily program.”
- II. *The objective to be gained:* “To present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.” God is our Creator, our Preserver, our Provider. It is in him we live, move, and have our being. Unto him our works and inmost thoughts are known. Unto him at last we must give account. When we stand in his presence in that day, we do not want to be ashamed of our work. We strive, therefore, to please him, to meet his blessed approval.
- III. *The method to be employed:* “Handling aright the word of truth.” Or “holding a straight course in the word of truth.” Or “rightly dividing the word of truth.” Each member of the class or congregation should be given his portion of spiritual nourishment in due season. Milk (simple lessons) to the babes, strong meat to the mature, the “first principles” to the alien, comfort to the broken-hearted, reproof to the careless and indifferent. Learn the necessities of the different members; teach them in such a manner as to meet these necessities.

"GRIEVOUS TIMES"**2 Tim. 3: 1-5**

"The last days" refer to the Christian era, especially to the period of time immediately before Christ's second coming. (See 2 Peter 3: 3, 4; Jude 8.) "The last days" are "grievous times"—critical, perilous times, times hard to endure. Paul was no pessimist. He told things as he saw them. He did not hesitate to announce unpleasant truth. (See Isa 30: 10.)

The cause of the "grievous times" is sin. These sins are specified.

I. *Corrupt love.*

1. "Lovers of self."
2. "Lovers of money."
3. "Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."
4. "Without natural affection."

II. *Pride.*

1. "Boastful."
2. "Haughty." The spirit of hatred and pride combined.
3. "Puffed up."
4. "Headstrong." Pride is at the root of self-will.

III. *Hatred.*

1. "Railers." Scoffers or abusers.
2. "Disobedient to parents." (See Rom. 1: 30.)
3. "Unthankful." Recognizing no obligation to people who love them.
4. "Implacable." Irreconcilable. Without mercy.
5. "Slandrers." Character assassins, cannibals.
6. "Fierce." Brutal. Savage. Cruel.
7. "Traitors." Recognizing no vow or obligation.

IV. *Intemperance.* "Without self-control." Having lived in drunkenness, sensuality and such like so long, they have lost control over their bodies.

V. *Irreverence.*

1. "Unholy." With no respect for things sacred.
2. "No lover of good." Without appreciation for the better things of life.

- VI. *Pretense*. "Having a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof." While holding to the sins herein catalogued, they hold to religious forms, rites, ceremonies. How are we to save ourselves from the perilous times? By abiding in God's word. (2 Tim. 3: 14-17.) It is all-sufficient. It equips the man of God for every emergency.



THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE

2 Tim. 3: 16, 17

Observe:

I. *Its origin*.

1. It is of divine origin: "Inspired of God." It is God-breathed. It contains God's thoughts.
2. It was written by holy men as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1: 21.)
3. It is a gradual unfolding of God's plan and will toward man. (Heb. 1: 1, 2.)

II. *Its function*: It is "profitable"—

1. "For teaching." It is the source of our instruction concerning the fundamentals of life.
2. "For reproof." That is, confutation of error.
3. "For correction." We make many mistakes and need correction. When we fall, the word of God sets us upright.
4. "For instruction," that is, discipline, "that is in righteousness." It offers the only malady for sin. When we abide by it, we grow in grace and in knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

III. *The end to which it leads*:

1. A complete life: "That the man of God may be complete."
2. A life of practical service: "Furnished completely unto every good work."

Practical Points

1. Since the Bible is God-inspired, men should give it reverence and profound respect.
2. Since it is a perfect or complete guide for faith and works, men should accept it as their creed and reject all

other creeds. If human creeds contain more than the Bible, they contain too much. If they contain less than the Bible, they contain too little. If they contain the Bible, no more and no less, they are Bibles and not human creeds.

3. Since it leads to a complete life, men should follow it cheerfully, hopefully.



LIFE AT THE LATTER END

2 Tim. 4: 6-8

Take note of Paul's state. A Roman prisoner, in a dark dungeon; forsaken by friends (2 Tim. 1: 15; 4: 10); treated as a malefactor (2 Tim. 2: 9); lost in obscurity—it was only after Onesiphorus had diligently sought for him that he found him (2 Tim. 1: 16, 17). The trial was over and the apostle was condemned. He thought that immediate death was certain. He charged Timothy to take up the fallen torch. (2 Tim. 4: 1-5.)

In the language of the text he gives a view of the Christian life at the far end. He looked at his life from a threefold aspect.

- I. *The present.* He was calm, at ease. Unlike those who have spent their lives in sin. "The devil has no happy old men." He employed two figures to express his condition.

1. A drink offering. "I am already being poured out as a drink offering." (See Gen. 28: 18; Num. 28: 7.) Life, with all of its interests, was being poured out like water never to be gathered up again. (See 2 Sam. 14: 14.)
2. A departing ship. "The time of my departure is at hand." (See Phil. 1: 23.) About to weigh anchor, to sever all connections with the harbor of this world and to set sail.

- II. *The past.* He thought of his Christian experience in three figures.

1. As a fight. "I have fought the good fight." From enlistment on the Damascus road unto the end, the battle had been unceasing. His body was mutilated, but his spirit was unyielding. (See Acts 14: 8; 22; 1 Cor. 15: 32; Gal. 6: 17.)
2. As a race. "I have finished the course." That which had

been a dominating purpose was now accomplished. (Acts 20: 22-24.) His course had carried him away from home, country, kin; it had carried him among foes, to prison and now to death. Never one time did he look back. (Phil. 3: 13, 14.)

3. As a trust, or stewardship. "I have kept the faith." The Christian life is a twofold trust: A Christian trusts the Lord (2 Tim. 1: 12); the Lord trusts the Christian (Matt. 25: 14; Acts 26: 16-19). Paul returned multiplied talents.

III. *The future.* He had reached the brink of the river. There he paused. After viewing again the course of his experience, he looked to the other shore which beckoned him. Through the eye of faith he saw—

1. The glorious reward: "The crown of righteousness." A garland of victory. A symbol of royalty—Paul was a child of the King.
2. A personal reward: "There is laid up for me . . . the Lord . . . shall give me." Paul had been making an investment; now to be enjoyed.
3. The Rewarder: "The Lord, the righteous judge." The apostle had just heard the verdict of death from the unrighteous judge; he hopes to stand before "the righteous judge" and to hear the decision reversed.
4. The rewarding day: "In that day." Everything is specific, very definite in the prisoner's mind. "The crown," "for me," "the judge," "that day," etc.
5. A reward for all of Christ's people: "And not to me only," etc. The Rewarder is impartial, bestowing the same great favor on all them "that have loved his appearing."

TITUS

THE ELDERS—Their Qualifications

Titus 1: 5-9

“Elder” and “bishop” refer to the same office—the words are used interchangeably in our text. The office is a position of service—“a work,” “a great work.”

Each congregation needs a plurality of elders. (Verse 5; Acts 11: 30; Phil. 1: 1, 2.) Not one elder over a plurality of congregations; not one elder over one congregation; not a group of elders over a group of congregations; but a group of elders over each congregation.

We shall come now to the qualifications of an elder. (See 1 Tim. 3: 5-9.)

I. *He must not be—*

1. A brawler: “Not quarrelsome over wine.”
2. A striker. He strikes with neither hand nor tongue the person who displeases him.
3. Contentious. He participates in no dispute or strife.
4. Covetous: “No lover of money”; “not greedy of filthy lucre.”
5. Self-willed, self-pleasing, self opinionated. His chief interest is in the Lord’s will, not his own.
6. A novice—one just born, or recent convert.

II. *He must be—*

1. Without reproach—blameless. One in whose life no evil practice can be found.
2. The head of a house: “The husband of one wife;” the ruler of his house (1 Tim. 3: 4, 5); his children must be orderly Christians. (Verse 6.)
3. Temperate—self-controlled. “Not soon angry.”
4. Sober-minded—a sound, well cultivated mind.
5. Orderly—of good behavior. Not clownish, not boorish.
6. Hospitable: “Given to hospitality”; literally, a lover of strangers.

7. Appreciative: "A lover of good"—good things in general.
8. Gentle—easily approached.
9. Just—in his dealings with men. (See Matt. 7: 12.)
10. Holy—in his relations with God.
11. Apt to teach—able and willing to instruct.
12. A reputable man. (1 Tim. 3: 7.)
13. Faithful to the word.

When a man possesses these qualifications, he has the divine right to rule and this right should be recognized by the congregation. As long as he retains these qualifications, he should continue to rule as an elder. Only if he loses his qualifications should he be removed from the office.



THE ELDER, "AS GOD'S STEWARD"

Titus 1: 7

Having studied a lesson on the qualifications of an elder, we now come to the consideration of his duties and rewards.

I. *His duties.*

1. As a human being, he should take heed to himself. (Acts 20: 28a.) In the life of any Christian, this is a matter of prime importance always.
2. As an older man, he should guide and encourage the younger. (See 1 John 2: 14.)
3. As an advanced Christian, he should rule the church. This should be done not by lording it over God's heritage, but by a godly example. (1 Peter 5: 3.) Not so much by what he does, but what he is he is to rule.
4. As a shepherd he should—
 - (a) Feed the flock. (Acts 20: 28b.)
 - (b) Lead the flock. (John 10: 4.)
 - (c) Shield the flock. (Acts 20: 29, 30.)

II. *His accountability.*

1. As the steward of God, he is responsible to God for the management of the things of God. The church belongs to God, not to the elders.
2. In the day of judgment, he shall account to the Lord for the way he shepherded God's flock. (Heb. 13: 17.) John

Brown said to a young minister, who complained of the smallness of the congregation: "It is as large a one as you will want to give account for in the day of judgment." This statement may be spoken more appropriately to an elder than to a minister.

III. *His reward.*

1. If he rules well, giving his time to the work, he should be counted worthy of "double honor"—stipend, wages, reward. (1 Tim. 5: 17, 18.)
2. The satisfaction of knowing that he has not lived for himself alone, but also for others.
3. The loving care of the Lord. He who blesses the Lord's people will be abundantly blessed by the Lord. A good shepherd is under the loving care of the Good Shepherd. (Psalm 23.)
4. A crown of glory. (1 Peter 5: 4.) If an elder serves well his apprenticeship, a promotion will be given. (Matt. 25; 21.)



THE GOSPEL TENSES

Titus 2: 11-14

These verses present the three tenses of the gospel of our Lord, namely:

- I. *The past tense*: "The grace of God hath appeared." It is a matter of history. This grace was—
 1. Unconditional—unmerited by man. ("Grace" means unmerited favor.) (See Titus 3: 4, 5.)
 2. Visible: "Hath appeared." In human form. In purity of character. In the selfishness of a life. In the beauty of wisdom. In a sacrificial death: "He gave himself for us."
 3. Saving: "Bringing salvation." Within reach of all. It may be had for the taking. (John 7: 37; Rom. 1: 16.)
 4. Universal: "All men." It knows no racial, social, or moral barrier. (See Acts 10: 34.)
- II. *The present tense*. The gospel teaches us the kind of life we should live "in this present age."

1. Note the lessons:

- (a) Negative: "Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts." (See 1 John 2: 15-17; 1 Peter 2: 11.) God's grace restrains, controls, even chastises. (Heb. 12: 6-11.)
- (b) Positive: "We should live soberly, righteously, and godly"— "soberly," i. e., with self-mastery; "righteously," justly with our fellows; "and godly," reverently toward God. The gospel touches every phase of life, whether toward self, our fellowman, or our God.

- 2. Christ's gift of himself constrains us to give ourselves to him without reserve. Let us stand fast in this grace. (Acts 13: 43.) If men do not respond to it, they are said to fall short of it. (Heb. 12: 15.)

III. *The future tense*: "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ," etc. We note here:

- 1. The blessed hope. Of a perfect environment. Of an endless life. (See Heb. 4: 9; John 11: 25; Rev. 21: 1ff.)
- 2. The coming of the Savior. In order to quicken the desire for the Savior's coming, the apostle reminds us of Christ's redemptive work. (Verse 14.)

The blessed hope will be realized at the Savior's coming. Hence, the connection of the hope and the glorious appearing. (See Rev. 22: 12.) This is an antidote to "lust" and a stimulus to live the Christian life in this "present evil world."

PHILEMON

REFRESHING CHRISTIANS

Philemon 7

There are some Christians in whose presence we feel uncomfortable. Like a wintry blast, they chill us through and through. (See 2 Tim. 1: 15.) There are other Christians in whose presence we find sunshine and genuine delight. As cold water refreshes the thirsty, as food the hungry, as fresh air the suffocating, so these Christians refresh our souls. What type are they?

- I. *They are praying Christians.* (Rom. 15: 30-32.) This language was written by Paul before he went to Rome. In it he requested their prayers to the end that he and they might be refreshed. The prayers of saints are refreshing to the weary Christian worker. Spiritual blessings come through prayer.
- II. *They are optimistic Christians.* (1 Cor. 16: 17, 18.) Evil tidings concerning the Corinthians had reached the ears of the apostle. (1 Cor. 1: 11, 12; 6: 1.) These things depressed his soul; but the coming of these brethren refreshed him. Perhaps, they presented the bright side of a dark situation.
- III. *They are responsive Christians.* (2 Cor. 7: 13.) Hearing of the sins of the Corinthians, Paul sent them a letter by Titus calling the congregation to repentance. The church responded and Paul wrote them again telling them how their response had refreshed them.
- IV. *They are sympathetic Christians.*
 1. Disciples of Sidon. (Acts 27: 1-3.) At this time Paul was on his way to Rome, greatly in need of sympathy which these disciples gave.
 2. Onesiphorous. (2 Tim. 1: 15-18.) Paul was a prisoner in Rome when this brother refreshed him. This the brother did, perhaps, by his companionship, his generosity, his words of encouragement.

3. Philemon. (Text.) By his ministry of love, the hearts of many had been refreshed.
- V. *They are cheerful Christians.* (Matt. 9: 2; John 16: 33; Phil. 4: 4.) There are people whose lives conform to the highest moral standard, yet they are not refreshing. They lack the charm of cheerfulness. The pillars in Solomon's temple were adorned with lily-work. There are Christians who are pillars without the adornment of cheerfulness. To moral strength, let us add the refreshing grace of cheerfulness. By so doing our religion will be more attractive.



"A BROTHER BELOVED"

Phile. 16

Onesimus, a fugative slave of Philemon and convert of Paul, was the apostle's companion and helper in the gospel. Paul thought of him not as a slave, but as a brother in the Lord Jesus. In the lesson before us we shall think of Onesimus as any fellow-member of the church, as a representative brother.

Because he "a brother beloved"—

- I. *We have the same Father.* The brotherhood of man implies the fatherhood of God. We cannot think of a brother in Christ apart from God, the Father. To him we humbly pray, "Our Father," etc.
1. We resemble our Father. We are "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1: 4.)
 2. We resemble each other—in moral and spiritual qualities.
- II. *We are members of the same family.* This family is the church, the household of God. (1 Tim. 3: 15.) This relationship involves certain privileges and responsibilities:
1. We eat at the same table. (Luke 22: 29, 39.) We commune with the Father; we commune with each other.
 2. We wear the same name. (1 John 3: 1; 1 Peter 4: 16; Eph. 3: 14, 15.)
 3. We are recipients of the Father's loving care. (1 Peter 3: 12; Psalm 90: 1.)
 4. We are under solemn obligation to uphold the Father's name and the Father's family by living in harmony with his will.

- III. *We have a common foe. That foe is sin.* We do not fight and devour each other; being fellow-soldiers, we fight the common foe. Our enemy is three-fold:
1. The world. (1 John 2: 15, 16.)
 2. The flesh. (Rom. 7: 21.)
 3. The devil. (Gen. 3: 1; 2 Cor. 11: 14; 1 Peter 5: 8.)
- IV. *We love him.* This love is mutual, We love Onesimus; Onesimus loves us. We suffer when he suffers; we are happy when he is honored. (1 Cor. 12: 26.) We help him in time of trouble. We restore him when he falls. (Gal. 6 1, 2.) We forgive him when he makes a mistake. (Eph. 4: 21, 32.)
- V. *We share the same blessed hope.* We are heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ. (Rom. 8: 17.) All that the Father possesses, including the mansions, shall be ours to share and enjoy throughout eternity. (1 Cor. 3: 21-23.)
Onesimus, let us walk together, work together, kneel together, talk together, rejoice together, fight together, and at last go home together.

HEBREWS

THE GREAT SALVATION

Heb. 2: 1-4

In these verses we find:

- I. *An admonition*: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard." The word "therefore" takes us back to the preceding chapter which reminds us that a divine revelation has been given. (Heb. 1: 1-14.) God has spoken to us not in a servant, but "in his Son." The greatness of the Son is celebrated. The relationship is most intimate. It involves a number of things:
 1. Wealth: for the Son is "heir of all things."
 2. Partnership: "Through whom also he (God) made the worlds."
 3. Divine likeness: "The effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance."
 4. Great power: "Upholding all things by the word of his power;" "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."
 5. Superiority over angels. (Verses 4-6, 13.)
 6. The same moral nature. (Verses 8, 9.)
 7. Eternal existence. (Verses 10-12.)
- II. *The necessity of the admonition*: "Lest haply we drift away from them." Human nature is weak and the current of temptation is strong. There is a tendency in the best of men to drift with the world's thoughts and motions. Unless we "give the more earnest heed" to God's revelation, we shall be caught in the current and carried far from God. (See Rom. 8: 13; 12: 2; Heb. 3: 12; 4: 1; 1 John 2: 15,16.)
- III. *A warning*. (Verses 2-4.) Consider the nature of the sin against which we are warned:
 1. The sin of omission. It isn't necessary to spurn the mercies of God, or to commit crime in order to be lost. One may be lost through carelessness or neglect of duty.

And neglect is a most dangerous sin: Because it is deceptive; because we may become involved so easily; because it is often at the root of other sins (2 Sam. 11: 1ff); because it is fatal. Sin is a disease; we need only to neglect the remedy to be lost.

2. A sin against light. The message has "been spoken" and confirmed by "signs and wonders," etc. We are left without excuse. (See John 3: 19.)
3. It is a sin against the Son. If those who sinned against the angels (law) were punished, "how shall we escape" if we sin against God's mercy, revealed in the gospel of God's Son? (See Heb. 10: 28, 29.)



THE WORD OF GOD

Heb. 4: 12, 13

Note its characteristics:

- I. *It is divine:* "The word of God." It is the expression of God's thoughts, of God's will. It is God's message to man. It is as far above man's words as God is above man.
- II. *It is "living."* Because it has life, it is able to impart life. Wherever God's word is found, there is life. In the absence of it, death reigns.
 1. It gives natural life. (Gen. 1: 11-27.) Before God spoke, there was neither life nor light. (Gen. 1: 2.)
 2. It gives spiritual life. (John 6: 63; Luke 8: 11.) By it men are begotten. (Psalm 119: 50; Jas. 1: 8; Acts 18: 8; 1 Cor. 4: 14.)
 3. It will raise men to immortal life. (John 5: 28, 29.)
- III. *It is "powerful."* It is pregnant with energy—"active." Through it or by it God does all of his work.
 1. In the natural realm. By it God made the world (Psalm 33: 6), he upholds the world, he will dissolve the world. (2 Peter 3: 5ff.) By it Jesus stilled the tempest (Matt. 8: 23ff), restored sight (Matt. 9: 27ff), healed the leper (Matt. 8: 1ff). All nature is subject to him through the word.

2. In the spiritual realm. By it Jesus foiled the tempter. (Matt. 4: 1ff.) When first proclaimed by the apostle, it "grew mightily and prevailed" (Acts 12: 24; 19: 20). It gives light. (Gen. 1: 3; Psalm 119: 130.) It makes those strong in whom it abides. (Acts 20: 32.) It is mighty to save. (Jas. 1: 21.)

IV. *It is sword-like.*

1. It cuts. "Sharper than ***sword." God's sin-killer, pruning knife. (John 15: 3.)
2. It cuts two ways: "Two-edged." It changes the life of all who handle it. It convicts of sin, also of righteousness.
3. It pierces: "Piercing even to the dividing," etc. It penetrates hearts. It awakens conscience. (See Acts 2: 37.)
4. It lays bare: "Quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." As the butcher's knife lays bare the secret parts of the carcass, so does God's word lay bare our thoughts and purposes. It reveals our weaknesses. (Verse 13.)

Since the word is divine, let us do it reverence. Since it is a living force, let us receive it. Because it is powerful, let us rely upon it for strength. Because it is God's sin-killer, let us give it a chance with our lives.



A FOUR-FOLD POSSESSION

Heb. 4: 14-16

The language of the text points out four things which belong to the life of a Christian.

- I. "*Our infirmities.*" An infirmity is a defect, a weakness, a failing. There are bodily infirmities (John 5: 5), also moral and spiritual infirmities (Rom. 15: 1). These are obstacles across our path, weights which seem to hold us down. Unwanted possessions.
- II. *Our Helper, the Lord Jesus.* For this benevolent work he is eminently qualified.
 1. He is *able* to help. He is "a great high priest." The all-victorious one, having "passed through the heavens." He

bears the proper relationship—"the Son." (Matt. 3: 17.) He possessed the moral strength—"without sin."

2. He *desires* to help. "He is touched." While on earth he desired sympathy. (Matt. 26: 40.) Now, he gives it. His earthly experience forever binds him to humanity. Though glorified, he is still a "man." (1 Tim. 2: 5.)
 3. He *knows* our needs. "He was tempted." Not merely as an observer but also as one who has played the game of life does he know us, and our experiences.
- III. *Our privilege.* (Verse 16.) This privilege arises from the fact that we have a Helper. Note here:
1. The apostle's urgent request: "Let us therefore draw near."
 2. The confidence which should animate us: "With boldness."
 3. The place we should approach: "The throne of grace." Grace sits enthroned! The poor sinner, like a beggar, may enter the presence of the great King!
 4. The favors we are induced to seek: "Mercy and grace." "Mercy" to cover past sins; "grace" for the present distress—"in time of need."
- IV. *"Our confession."* This is our profession, a vowal, calling, vocation. Seeing that we have a high priest with such love and power, let us not become discouraged amid our infirmities. "Let us hold fast our confession." There is danger—
1. Of letting it "slip." (Heb. 2: 1-3.)
 2. Of "coming short" of it. (Heb. 4: 1.)
 3. Of "falling away" from it. (Heb. 3: 12.)
- Sinner friend, you have infirmities. Living apart from Christ, you have no Helper. The privilege of approaching the "throne" is denied you. Make the confession; let the Christian calling become your calling. Jesus will then be your gracious Helper and you may draw near the throne of divine grace.



THE HEAVENLY HOPE

Heb. 6: 13-20

Hope is composed of two elements, namely, desire and expectation. Neither element alone is hope. We may earnestly desire

heaven, but if we have no Biblical right to expect it we cannot rightly say that we hope for it.

So, we shall take a look at both elements of the heavenly hope.

I. *The element of desire.*

1. As we turn the pages of the sacred Volume we are given many glimpses of the home of the soul.
 - (a) The negative aspect. All the evils associated with the life that now is shall be unknown. Note the "no mores": No more hunger, no more thirst (Rev. 7: 16); no more sea (Rev. 21: 1); no more death, no more mourning, nor crying, nor pain (Rev. 21: 4); no more curse (Rev. 22: 3); no more night (Rev. 22: 5).
 - (b) The positive aspect. All the good things of which we can think and more than we can think shall be associated with the future life. (1 Cor. 2: 9; Eph. 3: 20.) An inheritance undefiled and unfading in beauty (1 Peter 1: 3, 4); a house of many mansions (John 14: 1-3); an association of kindred spirits (Rev. 21: 27).
2. Such a home we greatly desire; but our desire alone is not hope. Another element must enter.

II. *The element of expectation.*

1. Salvation is not universal; it is conditional. The Bible sets forth the conditions of entrance into the home of the soul.
 - (a) Faith in the heart. (Mark 11: 22; John 6: 29; Heb. 11: 6.)
 - (b) A change in conduct. (Luke 13: 3; Acts 17: 30.)
 - (c) A confession of the Savior. (Matt. 10: 32, 33; Rom. 10: 10.)
 - (d) Obedience in baptism. (Mark 16: 15, 16; Acts 2: 38; 1 Peter 3: 21.)
 - (e) A growth in Christian character. (2 Peter 1: 5-11.)
2. All who comply with these terms have a right to entertain the great expectation; but the person who has not fulfilled these conditions, cannot or should not expect heaven.

Friend, you have an intense desire for the home of the soul. By living in harmony with the divine will, you can add the element of expectation to your desire, and thereby entertain the heavenly hope. (See Matt. 7: 21.)



DIVINE FORGIVENESS

Heb. 8: 12

We shall study:

I. *The nature of it.*

1. It does not erase the fact of sin; it does not blot from a person's mind the memory of his sin; it does not release him from all the consequences of sin.
2. It is a release from the enormous debt incurred by sin, a renewal of a broken fellowship, the restoration of the penitent prodigal.

II. *The need of it.* The fellowship with God has been broken. (Isa. 59: 1, 2; Rom. 3: 23.) All are not guilty of the same sin, but all are guilty. Let us here classify the sins of men:

1. Sins of the flesh: lewdness, drunkenness, etc. The prodigal son an example. (Luke 15: 13, 30.)
2. Sins of temperament: Stubbornness, sullenness, strife, unkindness, envy, unjust criticism, outbursts of passion, self-righteousness, prudishness, etc. The elder son, an example. (Luke 15: 25ff.)
3. Social sins: theft, robbery, extortion, murder, etc. Sins of the flesh and temperament may also be social sins.
4. Religious sins: idolatry, sacrilege, blasphemy, sorcery, false teaching, etc.
5. Sins of negligence. (Jas. 4: 17.) The priest and the Levite. (Luke 10.)
6. The sin of misplaced emphasis. (Luke 9: 59-62.)

III. *The difficulty of it.* Some think that forgiveness is a cheap thing, a thing easy to obtain; that God is a being of their convenience—"a bell hop." (See Amos 5: 4, 5.) But he is not always willing to forgive. (Joshua 24: 19.) Because forgiveness is precious, it is expensive—the most expensive thing ever offered the sons of men.

1. The cost of it.
 - (a) On the divine side. (Heb. 9: 22; Luke 25: 46, 47.)
 - (b) On the human side. It comes at the price of obedience (Acts 2: 38), of continued activity (1 John 1: 7, 9), of a forgiving spirit (Matt. 6: 14, 15).
 2. Reasons for the cost:
 - (a) God's hatred for sin. (Prov. 6: 16ff; Heb. 1: 9.) He knows the wreck and ruin it has wrought. To make forgiveness a cheap thing is to encourage sin.
 - (b) God's love for man. Most sins we commit hurt our fellowmen. It is difficult for God to forgive him who hurts the object of his love. Sin destroys the favorable condition for which God is working.
- IV. *The fulness and completeness of it.* When men meet the conditions, God freely cancels the debt, remembers it no more. (Matt. 18: 27.) When sins are forgiven, God no longer holds them against us. When the prodigal returns the Father does not penalize him or rebuke him or even remind him of his sins. (Luke 15; Psa. 103: 12; Isa. 38: 17.)
- V. *The blessedness of it.*
1. It removes the barrier between man and God, between man and man.
 2. It relieves the burden of dread and fear. (1 John 4: 17, 18.)
 3. It creates (or should create) in the soul of the one forgiven the spirit of forgiveness. (Eph. 4: 31, 32; 1 John 4: 11.)
 4. It causes the soul to well up with joy unspeakable. (Acts 8: 39; Rom. 4: 6-8.)



"OUR OWN ASSEMBLING"

Heb. 10: 25

The Hebrew brethren, because of persecution, had been forsaking the meetings. The inspired writer was seeking to check that tendency, knowing that it would lead to apostasy. God's people of today, for different causes, are forsaking the meetings.

In consideration of the duty of assembling with the saints of the Lord, let us inquire:

I. *When?*

1. Various ideas have been read into the text, some of which we shall consider. "Not forsaking our own assembling together—
 - (a) On the first day of the week."
 - (b) On the morning of the first day of the week."
 - (c) On the Lord's hour (from 11:00 a. m. to 12:00) on the Lord's day."
2. Our text does not specify the day. The Lord's day is certainly included; other days are not excluded. (See Acts 2: 42, 46, 47.) This should not be considered a burden, but a joy. (Psalm 122: 1.)

II. *Where?*

1. In a certain sense, the place is immaterial. (John 4: 20-24.)
2. In another, the place is highly important. There should be an assembly; this implies a place. This precludes the idea of "worshipping at home." We should assemble where God's people assemble.

III. *Why?* This is not an arbitrary command; but a loving admonition given in accordance with our nature and for our benefit.

1. That we may be with the Lord and receive his blessing. (Matt. 18: 20.) He who forsakes the meetings, misses the blessing.
2. Because such meetings beget and foster love. When a disciple begins to forsake the meetings, he begins to grow cold.
3. It affords an opportunity for mutual encouragement. (Heb. 10: 24.) How can we encourage each other if we do not meet?
4. Because the meetings promote the general growth of the church. Without the meetings, the church would soon become extinct.
5. It fortifies us for the day of calamity—"the day approaching."

- (a) To the Hebrew brethren, this was the day of Jerusalem's doom. The book of Hebrews was written a year or two before that calamity. The fellowship of the meetings would be very helpful to them in preparation for the disaster.
- (b) To the Christians of today, this is the day of judgment. The destruction of Jerusalem is typical of that day. In view of the approaching day—the day of all days—let us not forsake the assembling!



THE CALL OF ABRAHAM

Heb. 11: 8-10; Gen. 12: 1-3

In the history of the human race, Abraham occupies a most conspicuous place. He has the distinction of being called "the friend of God." (James 2: 23.) He lived in obscurity until God called him. And this call involves three things, namely:

- I. *Sacrifice.* The divine call always involves sacrifice. (See Mark 1: 17, 18; Matt. 9: 9; 16: 24.) He was urged to withdraw from the influence of idolatry, to live a life of separateness. (See 2 Cor. 6: 17, 18.) This made it necessary for him to forsake—
 - 1. His country. His native land. Familiar scenes dear to his heart. He was told to "get out" without a promise of returning.
 - 2. His kindred. Ties of nature, made strong by the association of the years.
 - 3. His father's house. His immediate relatives, the paternal shelter. This, the greatest sacrifice. (See Matt. 10: 37, 38.)
- II. *Promises.* For everything we surrender for the Lord's sake, we are assured of something better. When one hope is taken, a hope more precious is given.
 - 1. Guidance: "Unto a land that I will show thee." He was to move into a strange country, but not alone. The man who goes out at God's bidding is assured of God's guiding presence. (Psa. 23: 3; 119: 105; John 8: 12.)
 - 2. A numerous posterity: "I will make of thee a great

nation." (See Gen. 15: 5.) This was to compensate for the loss of kindred. One comfort was taken; a greater comfort promised.

3. Prosperity: "I will bless thee and make thy name great." This was to compensate for material loss. We never lose when we go out at God's command. (Matt. 19: 29.)
4. Guardianship: "I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse." The man who goes forth at God's bidding has God's protection. (Matt. 28: 19, 20; Rom. 8: 31; Heb. 13: 5, 6; 1 Peter 3: 13.)
5. The world's Redeemer: "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This promise was fulfilled in the Christ. (Gal. 3: 8.)

III. *Responsibility*: "Be thou a blessing." God called Abraham and blessed him that he, in turn, might be a blessing. The disciple who freely receive should freely give. (Matt. 10: 8.) We were called into God's kingdom; when we responded to the call we were richly blessed; and now comes the responsibility. With every blessing we receive there is a corresponding responsibility.



THE TRIAL OF ABRAHAM

Heb. 11: 17-19; Gen. 22: 1-19

Note here:

- I. *The command given.* (Gen. 19: 1, 2.) In this we find every requirement necessary to put Abraham to a test, to thoroughly prove him.
 1. "Take now thy son." Not thy sheep, not thy servant, but thy offspring—flesh of your flesh, bone of your bone.
 2. "Thine only son, Issac." The child of promise, the heir, the hope of nations, Ishmael had been banished.
 3. "Whom thou lovest." **Being an only child, given under remarkable circumstances, he was tenderly loved.** (See Gen. 21: 1-3.)
 4. "And offer him." Not see him offered. The son was to die by the hand of the father. In the burnt-offering the victim was cut to pieces, the separate parts laid in order on the wood and the whole burnt with fire. It is

easier to endure pain brought on by force of circumstances than it is to do with our own free will that which we know will involve us in suffering.

II. *The obedience rendered.* (Gen. 19: 3-10.) Abraham's obedience was characterized by four things, namely:

1. Meekness. When God spoke, Abraham offered no objection. He might have said:
 - (a) "He is the son of promise. Are you now going to take him?"
 - (b) "He is the son of my love. You taught me to love and cherish him above all others."
 - (c) "He is my only son. You have banished Ishmael."
 - (d) "I have cattle. Let me offer them instead."
 - (e) "It is wrong to take human life." (How can we justify God's command? He intended for Abraham to offer his son in spirit, not outwardly.)
2. Promptness: "Take now thy Son"—"and Abraham rose early in the morning," etc.
3. Deliberation. In the three-day journey, he had sufficient time to allow his natural inclination and affection to assert themselves, and rebel against the difficult command. (Verses 7, 8.)
4. Completeness. He went all the way, climbed the mountain, built the altar, bound the son, stretched forth his hand to slay.

III. *The blessings that followed.* (Gen. 19: 11-18.)

1. The angelic call. (Verses 11, 12.) It was not the flesh and blood of Isaac, but the will of Abraham that God wanted. Abraham received back that which he had offered, more precious to him than ever before.
2. The Lord provided. (Verses 13, 14.) When Abraham went his limit, the Lord came to his rescue. Abraham's extremity was God's opportunity.
3. The promise was renewed. (Verses 15-19.) This promise was twofold: It was personal; it was for the world.

Let us learn:

1. That we, like Abraham, are tested by God's word.

2. That God's commands may appear harsh in the beginning, but in the end they prove comfortable.
3. That we, like Abraham, may be called upon to offer our youth, our affections, our hope. (See Rom. 12: 1.)
4. That the sacrifice we offer returns to us more precious than ever. (See Eccl. 11: 1.)
5. That God wills not for us to suffer pain and loss, but to learn obedience. (See Heb. 5: 8.)
6. That provisions are made on the Mount of Sacrifice. Let us climb that mount, present the offering, and God will provide. We cannot know God's wonderful grace and goodness until we reach the summit.



THE CHOICE OF MOSES

Heb. 11: 24-26

The marvelous career of this wonderful personality hinged on one thing, namely, his choice.

Let us notice:

- I. *What he refused.* Let us remember that in every choice we make, something must be refused.
 1. A crown: for he was the adopted of royalty, heir-apparent of the throne. (Ex. 2: 11.) "When he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter."
 2. Great wealth: "The treasures of Egypt," the accumulated riches of the centuries. As ruler of this country, all of this would have fallen into his hands.
 3. Pleasures: "The pleasures of sin." He rejected the ease, the luxuries, the sensualities of the royal palace.
- II. *What he chose:* "To share ill treatment with the people of God." He suffered ill treatment from two sources:
 1. The Egyptians. Between the Egyptians and the Israelites there was a gulf. The former were rich, a proud people; the latter an ignorant, an enslaved, a cowardly, a despised people. The man who took the part of the Israelites soon had the wrath of the ruler and his subjects upon him.
 2. His own people. Between Moses and his own people there was a barrier. He was a man of faith and refine-

2. Diversity of standards. Though all read the same Bible, some will lay emphasis on one thing, some on another.
 3. Misunderstandings arise among the best of people, placing a strain on brotherly love.
- II. *The maintenance of it*: "Let love of the brethren continue." It is a sacred duty of every Christian to see to the continuation of it.
1. By the contemplation of divine love. (1 John 4: 19.)
The more we know of it, the easier it will be for us to love one another.
 2. From a pure heart fervently. (1 Peter 1: 22.) This love should be without hypocrisy. (Rom. 12: 9.)
 3. Because love is of God. (1 John 4: 7.) It is only when we are motivated by this principle in daily life that we become like the Father.
- III. *The manifestations of it*. (Verses 2, 3.) Brotherly love, when genuine, will find expression, or bear fruit.
1. In hospitality toward strangers: "Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unaware." Note here:
 - (a) That we are often forgetful and need to be reminded of our duty to each other. (2 Peter 1: 12.)
 - (b) That true character does not always appear on the surface of life: people may be better than they appear. (See Gen. 18, 19.)
 2. In sympathy toward sufferers: "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them; them that are ill-treated, as being yourselves also in the body." We see here:
 - (a) The duty: "Remember them," etc. All who are in distress should be remembered. (1 Cor. 12: 26.)
 - (b) The consideration that should incite us to the performance of this duty: "As being yourselves also in the body." A Christian should not think of his own interest apart from that of his brother.

