

BETTER THAN THE ANGELS

A Simple Score of Short Sermons
Giving Glory To God in Christ

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PREFACE

Matthew 10:34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Luke 12:51, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division."

So spoke the Prince of Peace to His disciples, but for more than nineteen centuries most of them have refused to believe Him. Small wonder that the world still knows Him not, when He is still betrayed in the house of His "friends"!

No character in history is more worthy of our attention than Jesus of Nazareth, even in the judgment of His enemies. The world is surfeited with false pictures - in sculpture, painting and literature - of fictitious Christ'. Comparatively speaking, the record that God has given of His Son is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

The glimpses of our Savior here presented are gathered from that divine record which is our only reliable source of information on the subject.

ROSCO BRONG.

TO MY WIFE

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROSCO BRONG, the author of this book, is qualified to write on Biblical subjects by many years of study and teaching in this field and by a sincere faith in the infallible truth of the written word of God. Ordained to the Baptist ministry in 1934, he has been teaching since 1952 in Lexington Baptist College, a Bible school which he has served as Dean since 1954.

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Another book of sermons by this author, "Love Builds Up".

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CHAPTER I

BETTER THAN THE ANGELS

GOD'S FINAL AND PERFECT REVELATION OF HIMSELF IS IN HIS SON

Hebrews 1:4, "Being made so much better than the angels, as he (Christ) hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

The Christian's life and hope are in Christ. This may seem to many a trite statement, but there are millions of people who call themselves Christians while in one way or another they deny the Christ of the Bible. There is no salvation in a Christ who is no more than a man, and there is no salvation in a Christ who is no more than an angel. The historical, risen, living Christ is either Who and What the Bible represents Him to be, or we have no Savior, the Bible is a book of myths, and we are yet in our sins. I Corinthians 15:17, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins."

II Peter 1:16, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty." I John 5:20, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life."

In opening this letter to the Hebrews, Paul points out first that Christ is far superior to angels, "...being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." We may note at least eight definite arguments for this truth.

"MY SON"

The "more excellent name" referred to is that of "Son," as the context shows. It is true that angels are occasionally called the "sons of God." Job 1:6, "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD,..." also redeemed saints are called by this name. I John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:.." Christ is God's Son in a sense distinct from all others. John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

Hebrews 1:5, "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?"

This is the very Son of God Who is described in verse 3 as the brightness or shining forth of God's glory and the character of God's substance. Such language could be fittingly used of no mere creature, but is perfectly appropriate to the Son of God.

"WORSHIP HIM"

Verse 6, "...let all the angels of God worship him." Only God deserves to be worshipped: to worship anyone or anything else is idolatry.

An amazing phenomenon is the acceptance and approval by supposedly conservative Bible teachers of the American Standard Version (1901). The infidel character of that version is revealed in the note on John 9:38: "The Greek word denotes an act of reverence, whether laid to a creature (as here) or to the Creator."

As a matter of fact, the Son of God is not a creature and the Greek word referred to is never used in the New Testament to denote reverence or worship to a creature with divine approval. The nearest approach to it is Matthew 18:26, "The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." where the king in the parable represents God in the interpretation Matthew 18:35, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Compare Matthew 4:9,10; Luke 4:7,8; Revelation 14:7-11; 19:10, 22:8,9.

But the Son of God is God Himself, and so the angels of God are commanded to worship Him.

ETERNAL KING

Unto the Son he saith Psalm 45:6-7, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre." Psalm 103:19, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." He is essentially Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." In vision John saw Him at His return, Revelation 19:16, "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

Surely those people who call themselves Christians but refuse to obey the commands of Christ have never seen Him enthroned in their hearts. In due time they shall surely be exposed for the false disciples that they are. Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

THE CHRIST

Hebrews 1:9, "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." The word Christ simply means that oil was put on. Spiritually, the title Christ signifies that the Son of God is God's anointed Prophet, Priest, and King.

In a subordinate sense, God's people have an anointing of the Holy Spirit, but Russellite blasphemers have yet to see that the true Christ was anointed

above His fellows. And on the human side this superior anointing was due to the fact that He "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity."

THE CREATOR

This same Son of God is He Who in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth (verse 10). Through Him God made the worlds (verse 2). John 1:3, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

So far is our Lord from being a mere creature Colossians 1:16, see Greek "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:"

In our context (Hebrews 1) we have the bold figure of the very heavens serving as a mere suit of clothes for the Son of God as Creator - clothes to be replaced in due time: Verses 11-12, "...they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

THE SAVIOR

No mere man or angel could even begin to purge one guilty soul from sin, and another great evidence of our Lord's superiority to angels is verse 3, "...when he had by himself purged our sins,..." The whole book of Hebrews is a setting forth of the eternal sufficiency of His saving work.

Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

THE CONQUEROR

Hebrews 1:13, "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" I Corinthians 15:25, "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

In a conflict between great powers, even in this world, there is little or no place for neutrals. In the spiritual conflict between God and Satan, there is ultimately no room at all for neutrals: we are counted on one side or the other, whether we wish it so or not. Jesus Himself said, Matthew 12:30, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." And He is the Mighty Conqueror Whose enemies are to be made His footstool.

THE JUDGE

Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord,..." This same Lord, who came

more than 19 centuries ago as Savior and must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet, is also the divinely appointed Judge. The judgment of men, our own judgment of ourselves, must yield to the judgment of the Son of God.

Acts 17:30-31, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every-where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

This judgment in righteousness will not be a matter of personal caprice, if anyone should imagine such a thing in God: John 12:48, see Greek "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

If you do not know this One Who is "better than the angels," receive Him as Savior today, lest you fall under the wrath of His judgment.

CHAPTER II

THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON

THE WORD WHO BECAME FLESH SON OF GOD - SON OF MAN

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Some modern translators have omitted the word "begotten" in John 1:14, 18 and 3:16,18, a mistranslation pleasing to infidels, but which cannot change the truth of God's word, as expressed in the Greek and correctly translated in the King James version, Hebrews 2:10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

GOD FROM ETERNITY

That Jesus Christ is and always was God is the plain teaching of the Bible. All the denials of devils and antichrists cannot change this fact. The following scripture texts referring to Him (as the context shows) need no explanation or interpretation: the words of the Bible are clear enough:

John 1:1,14, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was GodAnd the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among

us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

Isaiah 9:6, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Colossians 1:16-17, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever."

Revelations 1:11, "...I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:..." Compare with these words of Jesus the words of Jehovah Isaiah 44:6, "... I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." So the Bible plainly shows that the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New Testament are one and the same God.

WHEN BEGOTTEN?

Christian theologians have generally taught that Christ was "eternally begotten" by "eternal generation," whatever that means. This is probably true in some sense, but it seems beyond understanding for most of us, and it is not too clearly taught, if taught at all, in the Bible. It is clear, of course, that the Son has always existed, equally with the Father.

Some heretics and antichrists through the centuries, denying the eternal deity of Christ, have imagined that Jesus was only a man to whom God imparted a more or less divine nature in a "begetting" at the time of his baptism. Of course, there is not a word of scripture to support this blasphemy.

There is, however, a divine begetting of our Savior which is plainly taught in the Bible: Matthew 1:18, "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost."

As Luke tells us, the angel Gabriel said to Mary, Luke 1:35, "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

We may note that omitting the words "of thee," in accord with most of the manuscripts, we can translate the latter part of this verse as follows:

"Therefore also the holy thing being begotten will be called the Son of God:"

BOTH GOD AND MAN

In becoming human the Son of Man did not cease to be God. Matthew 1:23, "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

I Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,..." Mystery as it is, this is still a vital truth of God's word.

The angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds Luke 2:11, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Note the present tense, "is" not "will be." That is, the newborn human infant Jesus was at the same time "Christ the Lord."

Again, Luke gives us a glimpse of Jesus at the age of twelve, referring to God as His Father. Luke 2:49, "And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Not only at the baptism of Jesus, Matthew 3:17, "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." but also on the mount of transfiguration, Matthew 17:5, "While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." God the Father bore testimony from heaven: "This is my beloved Son."

Believing or not believing that Jesus is both God and man, the Christ revealed in the Bible, makes the difference between eternal life and eternal death, as Jesus Himself said: John 8:24, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

BOTH MAN AND GOD

In returning to His divine glory in heaven, the Son of God did not cease to be man. His glorified body: Luke 24:39, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." I Corinthians 15:20, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." The resurrected bodies of His saints: Philippians 3:21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Writing some years after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the inspired apostle referred to I Timothy 2:5, "...one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;"

Finally, when sinful men are brought to eternal judgment, it will be the judgment of this resurrected, glorified man:

Acts 17:30-31, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

MANY BRETHREN

Romans 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

If we have truly believed in this Christ of the Bible, we are in present possession of everlasting life. John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John 10:28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." John 11:26, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" etc.

In the resurrection of the just, even these mortal bodies, of which the flesh now lusts against the Spirit, will be made immortal and spiritual, fit for the Spirit's indwelling Galatians 5:17, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." I Corinthians 15:44,53, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body....For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

In this present life, Romans 8:10, "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

I John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Ephesians 2:1, If you are still "...dead in trespasses and sins;" I beg you to receive now as your personal Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, and enjoy in Him the gift of eternal life. Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

CHAPTER III

FLESH AND BONES

RESURRECTION OF THE BODY
A VITAL PART OF THE
GOSPEL OF CHRIST
TRUTH VITAL TO SALVATION

Luke 24:39, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

The words of this text were spoken by our Lord to His disciples after His resurrection, when they "supposed that they had seen a spirit." Surely His words are plain enough for anyone to understand. For more than 19 centuries the bodily resurrection of Christ has been a central truth of revealed Christianity. The great historic fact that provides the only reasonable explanation and ground of Christian faith. No wonder that Satan has from the beginning made this great doctrine one of his chief points of attack.

A VITAL DOCTRINE

The doctrine of the resurrection is not a minor or incidental teaching or theory that may be believed or disbelieved as a mere whim or fancy. To deny the resurrection of Christ is to deny His essential deity, Romans 1:4, for he was "...DECLARED TO BE THE SON OF GOD WITH POWER, ACCORDING TO THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS, BY THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD:"

Jesus Himself staked the truth of His Messianic claims on the one sign of His bodily resurrection:

Matthew 12:39-40, "But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

Early in His public ministry, Jesus asserted His authority by forcibly driving the money changers from the temple:

John 2:18-22, "Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign shewest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

In I Corinthians 15, the great "resurrection chapter," Paul, with his usual clarity and logic, shows under divine inspiration how indispensable is the truth of the resurrection to true Christian faith. I Corinthians 15:12-20, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also

which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." Let fools who will call the apostles false witnesses of God: we shall see in the end whose word shall stand.

RESURRECTION DENIED

That old liar and deceiver, the Devil, began fighting the doctrine of the resurrection long before the event. He had already persuaded the Sadducees, Matthew 22:23, "The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection..." Now, following the burial of the body of Jesus:

Matthew 27:62-66, "Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

But Satan outsmarted himself, as usual. We often marvel at the Devil's cunning, but we may well marvel more at how foolish that low slyness appears in the light of the simple truth of God's word. If that twisted infernal mind had been able to believe God's simple truth, he would surely not have gone to such pains to discredit in advance the lies that the soldiers were later paid to tell.

Matthew 28:11-15, "Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day." The original of all the Devil's attempts to give the lie to the historical fact of the resurrection. Later attempts of more modern infidels offer some variation but no improvement on this clumsy effort to conceal the truth.

A FAKE "RESURRECTION"

But Satan is never so cunning as when, instead of openly denying a truth of God's word, he pretends to accept it, but with some perverted "explanation" which has the effect of destroying it.

So he has taught "Jehovah's Witnesses" (falsely so called) and other modern infidels to speak of a "spiritual" resurrection not taught in the Bible as a fake substitute for the bodily resurrection that is taught in the Bible.

Poor, lost, sin blinded dupes of the Devil may like the idea of a bogus resurrection to float around through space as a bunch of ghosts without form or substance, but believers in Him Who is the resurrection and the life have a better hope.

Writers of "Jehovah's (false) Witnesses" have gone so far as to suggest that the body in which Jesus appeared to His disciples was miraculously created for the occasion and then as miraculously disintegrated. They do not hesitate to charge the Son of God with deception and fraud if they may but establish their own lies.

"THIS IS . . . ANTICHRIST"

I John 4:1-3, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

We may know little yet as to the identity of the great personal antichrist to come, I John 2:18, "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.'

We can be sure that every religious teaching against the person and character of the Jesus Christ revealed in the Bible is a religious teaching of antichrist.

We can be sure that every spirit that does not agree that the Jesus Christ of the Bible has come and still exists in flesh is not of God and this is that spirit of antichrist.

A GLORIOUS TRUTH

It was His body that Jesus promised to raise from the dead. John 2:21-22, "But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered..."

It was His flesh that did not see corruption, but was raised up to sit on David's throne. Acts 2:25-32, "For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corrupt-tion. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men

and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."

It was "many bodies" of the saints that slept of whom the graves were opened; Matthew 27:51-53, "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

It was His body that He showed to doubting Thomas; John 20:27, "Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing."

And it was He Himself Who said Luke 24:39, "...a spirit hath not flesh and bones, AS YE SEE ME HAVE."

WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

The Bible reveals little about the resurrection of the lost, but it will be a resurrection of judgment, to shame and everlasting contempt. We are more interested in the resurrection of the just, who believe Romans 4:25, that He "...was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

In His risen body Jesus ascended to heaven in plain sight of His disciples; in that same body He will come again, and every eye shall see Him. Acts 1:9-11, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Revelation 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen."

Meanwhile our citizenship is in heaven; Philippians 3:20-21, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Read I Corinthians 15:20-41, "Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." "...One star differeth from another star in glory:" That is, all the redeemed will share in the glory of Christ, but in different degrees.

I John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

CHAPTER IV

THE WAY OF SALVATION

THE BIBLE TEACHES ONLY ONE WAY TO BE SAVED IN CHRIST THROUGH FAITH

John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Popular religion nowadays acclaims Jesus of Nazareth as a great leader, teacher, and martyr, but has no faith in His leadership or teaching or in the purpose for which He died, according to His own testimony. Such religion is grossly inconsistent and unintelligent. If the leadership of Jesus is unsafe, if His teaching is untrue, if He died merely a martyr's death, then (may God forgive us the supposition) He was either a madman or a fraud. But if, as we know, He was an honest man and knew whereof He spoke, then it necessarily follows that He was and is more than a man: "I and my Father are one."

Remembering, therefore, that God the Son is speaking, let us give earnest heed to what it is that "Jesus saith unto him."

THE WAY TO HEAVEN

These words were spoken by our Lord to His disciples in His last discourse before His crucifixion. He had said: John 14:2-6, "...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." In other words, Jesus was talking about the way to heaven, or the way of salvation. Notice the statement, "...whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Thomas, like many other Christians, contradicted his Lord. "...we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Thomas, like many other persons, did not know what he was talking about, but at least he was willing to learn, which is more than we can say for some. His heart was in better condition than his head. He had been to some extent "taught of God," and he was therefore eager to hear God's word. He was teachable, and so "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

JESUS HIMSELF

"I" - Notice that Jesus does not say that our good works, our prayers, our obedience, or our faithfulness will save us; neither does He say that God's law, God's justice, God's love, God's mercy, or God's written word will take us to heaven; but "I" - Jesus Himself, the living Christ, is "the way, the truth, and the life." Romans 5:8, "But God com-mendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The soul that rejects this greatest manifestation of God's love will eventually receive not mercy but justice from Him Romans 2:6, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds:"

"I AM" - As God, our Saviour is the everlasting, self-existing "I AM," "the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." What He was when He spoke these words to Thomas, He is today and always will be.

AN EXCLUSIVE WAY

John 14:6, "I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life:" -Jesus is exclusive: "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." I Peter 1:24-25, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

I John 5:12, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

THE WAY TO WALK IN

"I am the WAY" - To His saints, Jesus is not only the One Who delivers from hell and receives into heaven, but He is God's ideal Man, Who came to do God's will when all other men had failed, and then on the cross traded places with all the failures who would agree to the exchange: II Corinthians 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the right-eousness of God in him." Believers in Christ have a way and are in a way that is radically different from the ways of the world. I Peter 2:21-24, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."

TRUTH IN PERSON

"I am . . . the TRUTH"- Jesus not only spoke truth, but, as God, He is Truth in person. Titus 1:2, He is "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" Other men have been such liars that their words could not be believed, but the Son of God declared to unbelievers: John 8:45, "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." Other men have erred from the truth by mistake, but of Jesus it is written, Mark 7:37, "And were beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well: he maketh both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." Other men have been deceived and misled by false friends, John 2:24-25; 6:64, "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man...But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him."

Even God's own people in this world, called to be witnesses unto Him, are not always trustworthy in their witnessing. Upon some of them God once pronounced a terrible judgment: Hosea 7:13, "Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me." If our salvation depended upon the truthfulness of a preacher or a church, or upon our own faithfulness, our case would be hopeless indeed. Revelation 3:14, But we may safely trust Him Who is "...the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;"

LIFE FOR EVER

"I am . . . the LIFE" -Jesus alone could say: John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" We creatures of His can live only according to His pleasure. Our natural life, made spiritual death by sin, is given to us for only a few years at the most, after which we must leave this world and go to hades or heaven, according as we are lost or saved, and await that day Romans 14:12, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." But spiritual life, which involves natural death, is everlasting.

The lost man is dead in sins and dead to God; that is, in his sins he is separated from God. Ephesians 2:1-12, "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the

exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" Therefore he must perish. The saved man is dead with Christ and dead unto sin; that is, in Christ's righteousness he is separated from sin and alive unto God. Romans 6:6-11, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Therefore he must live for ever. John 11:26, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? "

WHO WILL COME?

"NO man cometh" -The only exceptions are those who come by Jesus. Psalm 14:2-3, "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

"No man cometh" Jesus came to seek and save lost men, not angels or devils. James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." because I John 3:8, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

"No man COMETH" -We are commanded to seek the Lord, but, as noted above, no man, of himself, does so. Not only does man refuse to come to God, but when God comes to him, man, in his natural state, rebels. John 1:11-13, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The only persons who receive Him are "the sons of God."

WHOSE FATHER?

"No man cometh unto the FATHER" -God is the Father only of Christ and His redeemed. John 8:42,44, "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me...Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

GOD'S GRACE

"No man cometh unto the Father, But." Here is the provision of God's grace, James 2:13, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." Romans 3:25-26, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

"No man cometh unto the Father, but By me" Our first admittance into God's holy presence is by Christ, our Substitute. We are not yet there in person, while we remain in this flesh, Colossians 3:3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." it will not be long until God will grant us our desire Philippians 1:23, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:"

"HE THAT BELIEVETH"

"No man cometh unto the Father, but by ME ." Jesus again emphasizes the fact that He Himself is the Way. Revelation 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The Way of salvation is Jesus Christ our Lord. If we are in the way that leads to destruction, how can we escape from that way and get into the Way of Life? Jesus Himself gives the answer:

John 3:16; 6:47, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life...Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Romans 3:4, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." If you are not now in the Way that leads to God in heaven, you are surely on your way to hell. Acts 16:31, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

CHAPTER V

WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?

A SHORT STUDY OF THE GOSPEL AS TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE GOOD NEWS FOR SINNERS

I Corinthians 15:1-2, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain."

Many people talk loosely about "the gospel" without any clear idea as to the meaning of the word as used in the Bible. Oftentimes men say "the gospel" when they mean the Bible, but this is an incorrect use of the word. The gospel is contained in the Bible. But many people read the Bible and some preachers may even preach much Bible truth without ever knowing or preaching the gospel.

It is a tragic fact that countless souls are on their way to hell while they think they are saved because they obey some Bible commandments. Not the law nor the prophecies nor the moral teachings contained in the Bible, Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

What, then is the gospel? Let us see what the Bible teaches as to the meaning, content, source, description, extent, effects, and possession of the gospel.

MEANING

The meaning of the word "gospel" is "good tidings," that is, good news. Compare these two quotations for proof: Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" Romans 10:15, "And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

We can easily see from the very meaning of the word that the gospel does not include God's moral law given through Moses. Romans 7:12, "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." but it is bad news, not good, to sinful man. Romans 7:10, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is

written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL

If the gospel is good news, what is the content of the message? What has happened that makes us glad to hear about it? The content of the gospel: I Corinthians 15:3-5, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:"

Four facts are brought to us in this "gospel" or good news: First, "Christ died for our sins." Not merely that Christ died, which is a historical fact believed by lost sinners, but that He died "FOR OUR SINS." Second, "He was buried." This is proof of the first fact. Those who put Him to death made certain He was dead before delivering His body to His friends for burial. Third, "He rose again." Romans 4:25; 1:4, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification...And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"

Fourth, "He was seen." This is proof of the third fact, the fact of His resurrection. The apostle goes on to mention some of the chosen witnesses to the resurrection, who included a crowd of "above five hundred brethren at once," most of whom were still living when Paul wrote this epistle.

SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL

The gospel is "good news" because of its Source; the One from Whom it comes. We would rather hear from some persons than from others. We always want to hear news from our friends. We want to get news reports we can depend upon as true. Newspapers and radios and human "friends" may deceive us with false reports, but we can depend upon it that this good news is true, because it comes from God Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" I John 5:9, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

DESCRIPTIONS

We can get a better understanding of the gospel by noticing the various descriptions of the gospel as given in the Bible.

Mark 1:1, It is called "...the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;" because it tells of a divine Person. The gospel is personal news. Its emphasis is not upon principles or doctrine, important as these are, but upon the person and work of Jesus Christ. When we have believed the good news of Christ, we will have no trouble in accepting His teachings. The real reason that some people

dislike some of the doctrine of Christ is that they hate Christ Himself. John 10:26, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you." We need first of all and at all times to preach John 8:47, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. "

Mark 1:14, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God," This description reminds us that God is on His throne, ruling over the affairs of men, and especially ruling in the hearts and lives of His people. II Corinthians 5:14-15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

In Acts 20:24, the gospel is called "...the gospel of the grace of God." because it is the good news of God's grace or favor toward us in the person of His Son when He died for our sins.

In Ephesians 6:15, it is called "...the gospel of peace;" because it announces peace between the holy God and sinful man. I John 2:2, "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." II Corinthians 5:19, "...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;..."

In Ephesians 1:13, it is called "...the gospel of your salvation:" because it brings personal deliverance to all who believe it.

In II Corinthians 4:4, it is called "...the glorious gospel..." It is "the glorious gospel" because it is the "...gospel of Christ, who is the image of God,...." It tells of a glorious Christ, and it brings to us the promise of a resurrection. Philippians 3:21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

In Revelation 14:6, it is called "...the everlasting gospel..." because it never grows old. "News" of this world soon gets stale, and we are not much interested in worldly events of long ago. We have no use for newspapers and magazines a few months old, and even the world's best books are out of date in a few years and soon perish from the memory of man. But God's message of salvation in Christ for sinful man remains timely and of vital interest. As long as this sinful world shall stand, sinners shall rejoice in the good news that Christ died for our sins; and in an eternity beyond, the saints of God shall never cease to praise Him. Revelation 5:9, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;"

EXTENT OF THE GOSPEL

The extent of the gospel is universal in its appeal. Mark 16:15, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every

creature." Romans 1:14-15, "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you..."

The gospel is of limited extent, however, not in its message, but in its reception. The good news shall be told, to all, but it is good news only to those who believe it. Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;..." I Timothy 4:10, "For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL

The effect of the gospel, as already noted above, is to save the believer and aggravate the guilt of the unbeliever. John 3:18,36, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God...He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

These opposite effects of the gospel, according as we believe or do not believe, are plainly stated: II Thess-alonians 1:3-10, "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

POSSESSION

Finally, how about the possession of the gospel? Whose good news is it?

It is Christ's gospel because it is good news of Him, to Him, and for Him. Isaiah 53:11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our

faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus shares this good news with His people. II Corinthians 4:3, "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:" Romans 8:17, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

But to enjoy the benefits of the gospel it is not enough that we be associated with God's people. Luke 13:23-27, "Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity."

The gospel not only tells of a personal Savior, but it appeals to a personal sinner. Hence in Romans 16:25 Paul calls it "...my gospel...." Oh, happy thought! This gospel is not only good news of and for and to the Son of God; it is not only good news to and for many of my friends, and spoken of by them; but it is good news for me, it brings salvation to me, it has become my message to a lost world.

Friend, this is my gospel. Is it yours? Acts 10:43, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."

CHAPTER VI

THE DOOR OF FAITH

CHRIST IS THE DOOR FAITH COMES TO HIM AND ENTERS INTO LIFE

Acts 14:27, "And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

Luke tells us in this text of the report to their church in Antioch, following their first missionary journey, of Paul and Barnabas, the first foreign missionaries officially sent forth by the Holy Spirit through a New Testament church obeying the commission of our Lord. They reported to the church, not merely to a board,

committee, or "society," what "God had done with them" and that God "had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

DOOR IMPLIES WALL

Mention of a door necessarily implies existence of a wall or barrier of some sort. Of course, this is figurative language and we are not to think of a material door of wood or metal but rather of a spiritual means of entrance through a spiritual barrier.

The Bible makes it clear that man has erected a wall or barrier of sin between himself and God. This is true of the whole human race.

That sin constitutes a barrier between man and God is evident from two simple facts: First, man is a sinner; second, God is holy and just.

So the Bible declares Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" Galatians 3:22, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin,.."

Writing to the saints at Ephesus, Paul reminded them that before their salvation; Ephesians 2:12, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"

The prophet of old declared the truth about God. Habakkuk 1:13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?"

Nahum 1:2-3, "God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked:..."

We are told concerning the new Jerusalem, capital city of the new earth, home of the redeemed, Revelation 21:27, "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death;..." which means here separation from God, and this separation must be eternal unless we find a door - a way through the wall of separation between us and God.

CHRIST THE DOOR

The Bible does not leave us in doubt as to the way through this barrier and as to our access to God. Jesus said plainly, John 10:9, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."

Note that Jesus did not call Himself "a door" but "the door." In this matter of salvation from sin and fellowship with God, there is only one door.

True, some persons force themselves temporarily into the company of God's people as false claimants to His salvation, as did Judas Iscariot, but they will eventually be found out and cast out. So Jesus declares, John 10:1, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."

Again we read a clear statement from our Lord and Savior, John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

DOOR OF FAITH

Our text (Acts 14:27) speaks of the door of faith not as a different door but still of Christ as the door belonging to and used by faith. God has provided one door of admittance to His presence in the person of His Son; it is the door of faith because on the human side it is by faith that we enter in.

GOD OPENED THE DOOR

Our text declares that God opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. In another connection Jesus speaks of Himself Revelation 3:7, "...he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;" And this is true also in the matter of salvation with all its blessings. So we read the simple truth of God's word: Romans 9:18, "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

It is for this reason that we read of Paul and Barnabas rehearsing not what they had done but what "God had done with them."

OPENED BY PREACHING

But just as it is true that God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles generally as in previous generations He had opened the door to the Jews as a people; just as it is true that only God can open the door for any individual believer; so it is true also that God has an appointed way of opening the door of faith.

I Corinthians 1:21, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Romans 10:12-15, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful

are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

God's way of bringing lost sinners through the door of faith for salvation by His grace is through the preaching of His word, Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

ENTRY BY FAITH

Christ our Savior is called the door of faith because it is by faith and only by faith that accountable sinners enter into salvation through Him.

Some deluded souls have vainly supposed that since salvation is of the Lord man has no responsibility to receive it. They imagine that some of God's elect are saved without ever hearing and believing the gospel. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Limitations of space forbid quoting of many scripture passages plainly revealing the fact that unbelievers are lost, condemned, and on their way to hell. A full quoting of such passages would include a large part of the Bible.

As to the vain supposition of any number of souls, even of one soul, elected to salvation apart from hearing and believing the gospel, there is not one verse of scripture to support such a notion.

John 1:12, "...as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"

John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

John 8:21,24, "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come...I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Romans 4:5, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Hebrews 3:19-4:2, "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

Revelation 21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremon-gers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

"ALL LIARS"

All religions which teach that sinful man can be saved and enter into fellowship with God through human works and efforts are false. Religions which suppose that there is any other door than Christ are false. Religions which trust in men's versions of God's supposed election apart from faith are false.

Whether the false teachers of these false religions are included among the "all liars" of Revelation 21:8 is a question that they will certainly find answered in the next world if not in this.

For those who by God's grace are willing to believe Him, it is enough to know that Christ the door is the door of faith and that God has opened this door to the Gentiles so that whosoever will may come.

CHAPTER VII

FAITH THAT SAVES

DEAD FAITH CANNOT SAVE

LIVING FAITH IN A LIVING SAVIOR IS WHAT WE NEED

Hebrews 10:39, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Two opposite but equally fatal errors are widely held among professed Christians with regard to the means of obtaining salvation: first, that we are saved by our works, or by a combination of faith and works; and, second, that we are saved by a mere historical and intellectual faith.

Very little spiritual understanding or knowledge of the Scriptures is needed to show us that our works can neither save nor help to save us. Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" Romans 3:28, "There-fore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" Romans 11:6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work."

OPPOSITE ERRORS

The second error mentioned above, that a mere historical and intellectual faith is sufficient, is more commonly entertained among Baptists. This error naturally encourages, as a reaction, the opposite heresy of adding dead works to a dead faith in a vain attempt to obtain that which is thus despised and rejected - the grace of God.

Let us always remember, therefore, that not with the head but Romans 10:10, "...with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Our text above (Hebrews 10:39), with its context, suggests that there is a seeming form of faith that is really a drawing back to perdition. We find the same truth expressed: James 2:19-20, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

DEAD FAITH

It was with reference to such a "dead faith" James 2:14, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?"

The answer is, of course, that such faith as a man merely says that he has, such faith as is dead, such faith as does not work -- such faith cannot save.

HOW JUSTIFIED

So although, with reference to justification before God, Romans 3:28, "...a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." yet James 2:24, tells us "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only."

These statements are in perfect harmony. God knows our hearts and needs not to wait for our works to prove our sincerity, but the only way that men can justify us in our claim to believe is to observe our works.

SAVING FAITH

What does it mean, then, to believe to the saving of the soul? If we will search the Scriptures, we will find that saving faith includes belief about Christ, belief of Christ, and belief on or in Christ. Any one of these expressions, in the true sense, necessarily involves the others.

THE ANOINTED

I John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten

of him." "Christ" or "Anointed" is the official title of Jesus, signifying His three fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.

Acts 3:22-23, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

Hebrews 9:11-12, "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Revelation 19:16, "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

BORN OF GOD

Now, if you really believe that Jesus is the Christ thus revealed in the Bible, it is not written that you will be born of God, but that already you are born of God. In fact, a literal translation of I John 5:1 is: "Everyone believing that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God."

However, the believing referred to is not a mere surface assent with inward reservations and denials, but what we might describe as a heartfelt conviction of the soul, or, as Philip said to the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8:37, "...If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

BELIEVE HIM

If we truly believe that Jesus is God's great Prophet Whom all must hear or be destroyed, we will heed His words. Millions of people call themselves Christians who will deny the plain teachings of Christ, and to them He says: John 5:37-38, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.", John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

ETERNAL LIFE

Above all, we must say that to believe to the saving of the soul is to believe "on" or "in" Jesus. John 3:15, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

To believe in Jesus means simply to receive Him as our Saviour, to trust Him to save us, and therefore humbly to give up, surrender, or deny ourselves that we may live with Him.

RECEIVE HIM

John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"

II Timothy 1:12, "...I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

FOLLOW HIM

Mark 8:34-35, "And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." Luke 14:26-27, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

BELIEVE NOW

My dear reader, are you among them who draw back unto perdition, or of them that believe to the saving of the soul? It is written of certain others that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Hebrews 4:1-2, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

May the Spirit of God enable you now to believe in Jesus to the saving of your soul. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved:"

CHAPTER VIII

LIKE PRECIOUS FAITH

FAITH IN CHRIST IS PRECIOUS BECAUSE IT MEANS HONOR AND PRIVILEGES LIKE THOSE OF THE APOSTLES

II Peter 1:1, "...to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:"

The inspired apostle in this text describes our faith as equally precious, or, as the word could be rendered, equally honored or privileged. So our faith in Christ is not to be thought of lightly, but is something very precious that we should learn to appreciate more and more. We can appreciate it better if we think not only of the value of faith in general but also of the object and consequences of the particular faith here considered.

BETTER THAN DOUBT

Faith in general is better than doubt as positive virtues generally are better than negative. True, a so-called "blind" faith, misdirected, may get us into trouble, and sometimes it may pay us to be skeptical, as Eve might better have disbelieved the serpent: yet it remains true that intelligent life would be impossible without some kind and degree of faith.

We must have some faith in circumstances. If we would survive and prosper, we must believe that our situation and the conditions surrounding us are such that by some means we shall be able to survive and prosper. Although a blind and foolish faith, refusing to face facts, may lead us to disaster, it is still true that when we have lost all hope we are at the point of death. We must believe in the possibility of survival or of improvement of our situation, whatever the circumstances, or we are miserable indeed.

We must have some faith in people. Without this faith society would be impossible. We live from day to day in the belief that the people around us will, more or less, follow the pattern we have observed in the past. The employee does his work in the faith that his employer will pay him for his labor. The business man invests his capital in factory or store in the faith that people will buy his goods. People entrust their money to banks and banks lend it out again, all trusting to other people that it will be repaid. Sure enough, sometimes our faith in people is disappointed: nevertheless, without this faith we could have no civilized life.

We must have some faith in ourselves. Overconfidence may be disastrous, but we can accomplish nothing, we will not even try to accomplish anything, unless we have some faith in ourselves. It is foolish indeed to believe that we are something we are not: it is just as foolish and perhaps more deadly to believe that we are not something we are: that is, to doubt our real selves.

The Bible teaches humility and self denial: it does not teach the doctrine of the annihilation of the self, the soul. The doctrine of annihilation of the soul is a doctrine of devils and of false religions of this world. We must have some faith in ourselves, in our real and never-ending existence in life or in death, if we would spend our lives wisely and profitably.

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

But faith in general, faith in circumstances, faith in other people, and faith in ourselves is often ill-founded and doomed to disappointment. Necessary as it is, superior as it is generally to an attitude of doubt, such faith can give us no absolute assurance, because it is directed toward things and people that change and decay. Satan has filled the world with science falsely so-called that ought to be doubted; circumstances change contrary to our expectations; people show themselves of character other than we thought; we are ourselves weak and fallible creatures.

Only God is all-powerful, all-wise, and all-good. Only God is completely trustworthy. Only God can be depended upon always to act in the future in perfect accord with the character He has revealed in the past, for He alone changes not.

And so it is not faith in general that the inspired apostle described as precious, but faith rightly directed, faith in God through Jesus Christ His Son.

OBJECT OF FAITH

We need to see that faith in itself has little merit -- no merit at all so far as salvation is concerned. A man may have a mighty faith in things that will take him far in this life: he may believe in favorable circumstances, he may believe in people who will help him to get ahead, he may believe in himself and his destiny -- yea, he may believe that he is one of the very elect of God -- he may believe in all this and die and go to hell because he has not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ unto the saving of the soul.

Salvation is in Christ and in Him alone, so far as merit is concerned. Our "like precious faith" is not precious because of what faith is in itself, but because our faith is directed, toward God in Christ. No other faith can bring us the honor and privilege of being God's people as the apostles were, but only faith in the same God in Whom they believed.

The gods of this world, the gods of philosophers and theologians, the gods of rationalism, humanism, and so-called neo-orthodoxy, are not fit objects of faith. Only the God of the Bible, the Creator of all things, the Judge of all the earth, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is worthy of all our trust and confidence. If we really believe in Him, we have obtained the "like precious faith" referred to in our text.

WHAT FAITH BRINGS US

True faith in the true God is precious because of its consequences -- because of the blessings we receive with and through it. Remember that the words "like precious" of the King James version could be rendered "equally honored or privileged." What are some of the honors or privileges that become ours when we believe God?

FORGIVENESS

Acts 13:38-39, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Sin is the great barrier between man and God. Sin weighs upon the enlightened conscience and would make a sinner miserable in heaven if he could get there. Sin is the summation of all that is hated by the thrice-holy God. The sinner must be forgiven of his sins, they must be removed from him. Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." or, with his sins still upon him, he must go into hell forever. What a precious faith it is that brings to us forgiveness, that takes away from us our sins, so that we can stand before God-- justified!

LIFE

John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." What is the nature of this everlasting life that we have just begun to live and that shall never end? We know so little even about the life we have from Adam, which is spiritual death. How much less do we know of that life that has come to us from above, the life in which we know God!

John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

And this life is ours forever, since we have believed in Christ. How precious is this faith!

SONSHIP

I John 3:1-2, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

I John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him."

A popular heresy speaks of God as the Father of all men, but it is not so. According to the Bible, unbelievers are children of the Devil, and only believers in Christ are children of God. How precious is this faith that cancels the claims of Satan upon us and makes us children of the true and living God!

FELLOWSHIP

Our relationship to God as His children is not a mere theory, but makes possible for us the enjoyment of real fellowship with Him in our actual experience.

I John 1:3-7, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

What a blessed experience it is to walk and talk with our Savior as our dearest friend, and to know that He will never leave us or forsake us! And how precious is the faith that brings us this blessed experience!

VICTORY

I John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

There may be temporary setbacks, reversals, and backslidings, but there is no lasting defeat for the child of God. We are on the winning side, and are sure of victory in the end. Our Savior is triumphant, and we have victory in Him. Every enemy will be put under His feet, and we shall reign with Him. How precious is the faith that gives us this assurance of victory!

GLORY

John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

I John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

Hebrew 2:10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory...."

Romans 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

How precious is this faith that will bring us to share in the glory of our risen Lord!

THROUGH HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

Note, finally, that we have obtained this precious faith not through any righteousness of our own but "through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

If you have not yet obtained like precious faith with us, believe now in the Lord Jesus Christ, and all these blessings will be yours.

CHAPTER IX

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

GOOD NEWS FOR SINNERS WITH A SOLEMN WARNING AGAINST UNBELIEF

Acts 13:38-39, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

In his first sermon to the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia, the apostle Paul briefly reviewed Old Testament history, including the promise of a Savior of the seed of David. This promise, said Paul, was fulfilled in Jesus, as preached by John the Baptist, condemned by the unbelieving rulers of the Jews, crucified by the authority of Pilate, and buried. Acts 13:30, "But God raised Him from the dead:"

"HIS WITNESSES"

After the resurrection of Jesus, Acts 13:31, "And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people." So the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is a fact attested by a large company of eyewitnesses.

II Peter 1:19, But the testimony of God's "word of prophecy" is "more sure" than any or all human testimony and so Paul went on to quote fulfilled prophecies from the Psalms as conclusive proof that the resurrected Jesus was the divinely promised Savior.

"FORGIVENESS OF SINS"

Acts 13:38, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins:"

Now, this is the gospel: this is good news for every sinner that will believe it. And all men are sinners, and need to hear the good news, and need to believe it.

Romans 3:9-23, Jews and Gentiles, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Sin is the transgression of the law; the thought of foolishness is sin; whatsoever is not of faith is sin; to know to do good and do it not is sin; all unrighteousness is sin: we all have sinned and gone astray.

"WAGES -- DEATH"

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Spiritual death --- separation from divine life. Physi-cal death --- separation of soul from body. The second death --- eternal separation from God, II Thessalonians 1:9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction (not annihilation) from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"

So sin pays wages: the terrible penalty of death: an eternal penalty unless we obtain forgiveness. "Forgiveness" here means "remission," a sending or

letting go away. The sinner must be separated from his sins or his sins must forever separate him from God. Surely every sinner is in desperate need of complete and permanent "forgiveness" or remission of his sins.

JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS

The salvation here offered, the forgiveness here preached, is not mere reprieve or partial pardon. Acts 13:39, "...by him all that believe are justified from all things,..."

Forgiveness (remission) of sins in Christ means that (so far as eternal judgment is concerned) the sinner is declared righteous: no matter what sins he may have committed in the past or may commit in the future, the true believer is adjudged righteous for Jesus' sake:

Romans 4:6-8, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

No wonder that David burst into song as he contemplated the wonderful grace of God, Romans 4:5, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

"NOT BY THE LAW"

Paul preached here the simple truth that is taught everywhere in the Bible: Acts 13:39, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

Sad to say, not only the Jews of that day, but Jews and Gentiles before and since have been trying to get right with God by obeying His law - and all in vain. Romans 3:20, "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Paul had come to know Christ, and was careful to preach Him alone as the only hope for lost sinners. Galatians 2:21, "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

"THROUGH THIS MAN"

Forgiveness of sins is "through this man," through Him "Whom God raised again" and Who "saw no corruption."

Divine forgiveness cannot be obtained by following the example or obeying the moral teachings of Jesus, any more than it can by obeying the law of Moses.

Paul preached forgiveness of sins "through this man": not through His teachings or example, but through Him personally.

Peter preached the same truth, as it is taught throughout the Bible:

Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

"ALL THAT BELIEVE"

This forgiveness of sins is not for everyone, but is for anyone that will believe. The promise is not the justification of all sinners, or of all religious persons, or of all church members, but of all that believe.

Acts 13:39, "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

The believing referred to is not believing just anything, but a trustful believing in the Christ Romans 4:25, "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

"BEWARE"

If sinners had as good sense spiritually as they have in the things of this world, such preaching as Paul did would bring them all to saving faith in Christ. But the sinner does not want forgiveness on God's terms. And so we have the solemn warning:

Acts 13:40-41, "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you."

So the response to Paul's preaching at Antioch in Pisidia was varied, as has been generally the case when the word of God has been preached to the people of this world.

Acts 13:43,46,48, "Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God...Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles...And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

John 1:11-12, So it has ever been: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:"

Do you believe? Have you been born of God? Are your sins forgiven? Are you justified from all things?

Revelation 21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremon-gers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

"BE IT KNOWN"

"Be it known unto you," said Paul. And he did what he could to let them know. And the fact that many of his hearers disbelieved, "judged themselves unworthy of everlasting life," did not change the truth of God's word.

Millions of sinners still will not believe - they insist on going on to that lake of fire and sulfur - but other millions, yea, a multitude which no man can number, have believed, and will for ever sing the praises of Him in Whom they are justified from all things.

Acts 16:31, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

CHAPTER X

LEARN OF ME

AN INVITATION AND A CHALLENGE

Matthew 11:28-30, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Here is an invitation and a challenge to persons who pretend to believe that Jesus was a great and good teacher and religious leader, but who refuse to accept Him as Savior and Lord.

The trouble with such persons is that they really believe they know better than Jesus, and instead of being willing to follow Him, they themselves want to be leaders and have others following them. They think Jesus is dead and that at least some of His teachings are "out of date," whereas in fact Revelation 1:18, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Mark 13:31, "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

THE ONLY TEACHER

Jesus Himself claims to be not merely a great teacher, but the only teacher who can reveal God to man. John 3:13, "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Matthew 11:25-27, "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

Since Jesus, the Son of God, is the only one who can teach us what we need to know of God and of our relationship to Him, we do well to forsake the traditions and opinions of ignorant men who think themselves wise, and come humbly with open minds and hearts to learn at the feet of Jesus, Mark 1:22, "And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes."

THE LORD JESUS IS GOD

Let us remember that Jesus is God: therefore when He invites us to come to Him, to learn of Him, He invites us to come to God, to learn of God. John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." I John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one."

In some of the passages of scripture that I shall now quote, the Father or the Holy Spirit are mentioned, rather than the Son, but the Father reveals Himself in the Son. John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." and Jesus declared John 16:13-14. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

TO BE SAVED

Lost sinners need to learn of Jesus in order to be saved. John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Titus 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he

might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

THE SAVED NEED TO LEARN

Children of God need to learn of Jesus in order to live the lives that will be pleasing to Him. As children of God, we have already learned that Christ died for our sins Ephesians 1:6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." But we have much more to learn. II Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..."

Among the lessons that we need, as His disciples, to learn of Jesus, I shall mention five: FAITH, LOVE, PRAYER, WORK, and WAR.

FAITH

Job 34:31-32, "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." II Corinthians 5:7, "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)" We cannot always see or understand the reason for some of God's commands; but we do not need to see: we need only to believe. We see sin and trouble and confusion all around us in this world, and we cannot see what is going to happen next; but by faith Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

We must learn or receive, from God Himself the faith that is necessary to enable us to think and live in a manner acceptable to Him: Romans 12:2-3, "And be not con-formed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

God gives us faith through or by His Son: Acts 3:16, "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

Yes, if we would "walk by faith, not by sight," we must learn of Jesus II Corinthians 4:18, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Like the apostles of old, we need to come to the Lord Jesus with prayer, Luke 17:5, "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith."

LOVE

We need to learn of Jesus not only to believe God, but to love Him and, loving Him, to love what He loves, His word, His work, His people.

Galatians 5:6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circum-cision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Faith shows us the way; love moves us to go that way. True faith and love are inseparable. I John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begot-ten of him." John 8:42, "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me."

The love we need has its origin in God the Father: I John 4:7-8, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

This love is applied in our hearts by God the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5, "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

But the SUPREME MANIFESTATION of love is in God the Son, and it is the knowledge of His great love for us that brings forth an answering love from us: I John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." Let us learn of Jesus the lesson of love: John 15:11-13, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

PRAYER

Another thing we need to learn of Jesus is prayer. Luke 11:1-4,9, "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil... And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Mark 14:38, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak." John 14:12-14, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it."

From the example, the instructions, the commands, the promises of Jesus, let us learn the lesson of prayer. I John 5:14, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:"

WORKS

John 8:29, "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him;" and if we would please God with our works we must learn them of Jesus. Psalm 25:4,5, "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day." Psalm 119:32-34, "I will run the way of thy command-ments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." Psalm 143:10, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." I Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"

Let us learn of Jesus the lesson of good works. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

WAR

Finally, we need to learn of Jesus the lesson of war. Matthew 10:34, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Psalm 18:34, "He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms." Psalm 144:1, "Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:"

II Corinthians 10:2-6, "But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh. For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."

The better we learn the lessons of faith, love, prayer, and works, the more we need to learn the lesson of war, to I Timothy 6:12, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

I Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" The devil would rather destroy, if he could, a faithful servant of the Lord than a hypocrite or a "no account" Christian. Jesus and Jesus alone can give us victory. John 16:33, "...In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." I John 4:4, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."

SINNERS - COME

Jesus invites lost sinners to come unto Him and learn of forgiveness of sins and eternal life, which is the knowledge of God. And Jesus invites His people to come unto Him and learn to believe or trust Him more, to love Him more, to pray for fellowship and guidance and blessings, "to maintain good works," and to "fight the good fight." He knows all things, and we can learn of Him.

CHAPTER XI

GOD MAKES KNOWN A MYSTERY

A RICH AND GLORIOUS MYSTERY CHRIST DWELLS IN US AND IS OUR HOPE OF GLORY

Colossians 1:27, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"

The apostle here speaks of the hope of glory as we might speak of the hope of heaven, the hope of being in the presence of God's glory and partaking of that glory in the world to come. In other words, he tells us that our experience of salvation in this life and the next, our hope of sharing in the glory of our Lord in eternity, all this is to be found in Christ, the indwelling Christ.

NOT OUR "GOODNESS"

Goodness of moral character, however exalted, can provide no hope or assurance of glory. It has been said that actions create habits, habits form character, and character determines destiny. This sentiment is in accord with the religions of this world, but will not stand the test of God's word. No goodness of ours is good enough to meet the demands of God. Isaiah 64:6, "...all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,..." And with reference to the strictest religionists in the world's history, Jesus said, Matthew 5:20 "For I say unto you,

That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

NOT OUR SINCERITY

The fact that we are sincere in our desire to do good, even sincere in a desire to please God, is no ground for hope of glory to come if we are sincerely wrong. Sincerity is no substitute for truth. Surely we must be sincere, for we cannot deceive God if we try. He knows our hearts, and insincerity which may mislead our fellowmen and even ourselves provides no covering from His eyes. Yet it remains true that God demands righteousness and truth, not mere sincerity.

NOT OUR RELIGION

We may speak sometimes of getting or having religion and some people seem to think that having a religion, any religion, is enough to gain them acceptance with God. Some even suppose that religious activity or profession or membership in some so called church of one name or another can furnish them a hope of glory. It is not so. The Bible tells us that some religions are vain. Jesus spoke of some who worshiped in vain, Mark 7:7, "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." He warns of others who call themselves by His name but whom He will disown in the day of judgment. Matthew 7:21-23, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

NOT ORTHODOXY

II Timothy 1:13, It is right that we should "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." We ought to believe and teach correct doctrine, which is the meaning of orthodoxy, but mere lip service to sound doctrine can be found where there is no living hope of glory.

Really, sound doctrine is vitally connected with right living, and the idea that a person can honestly and in a spiritual sense hold to sound doctrine and still live in an ungodly manner is unscriptural. Through the apostle Paul, God clearly tells us that ungodly conduct is contrary to sound doctrine. I Timothy 1:9-11, "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For

whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust."

Nevertheless it is true that men can outwardly assume a sound orthodox doctrinal position who before God have no hope of glory.

NOT ELECTION

The mere fact of God's foreknowledge, predestination, and election, as declared in the scripture, cannot of itself provide us any hope of glory. Hence it is that those warped souls who dote on the doctrine of election, but deny the teachings of God's word having to do with human responsibility and experience in the grace of God, those poor souls have no sure hope, they themselves being witnesses.

It is not enough to know that there is such a thing as divine election: If we have no way of finding out in this life whether we are included in that election, then we are miserable indeed. II Peter 1:10, Therefore we are commanded to "...give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:"

It is possible for a child of God to have a hope both sure and steadfast Hebrews 6:19, "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;" A mere harping on the doctrine of election cannot give us this assurance.

NOT VAIN FAITH

Paul told the Corinthians I Corinthians 15:2, "By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." So there is such a thing as vain faith. A misdirected faith is certainly a vain faith. Likewise, a so called faith in Christ that does not bring Him as a real person into our living experience - such faith also is counterfeit and vain.

So our text makes it plain that our hope of glory is not a thing, but a person, a living Christ, and He in us.

COUNTERFEIT CHRISTS

Of course, the Christ referred to is the Christ revealed in the Bible. There are many antichrists, counterfeit christs and enemies of Christ, claiming the worship and allegiance that rightfully belong to the Son of God as He is revealed to us in the written word. No christ who is the product of human imagination or satanic deception can give to his followers anything but a share in the final overthrow and judgment that awaits him when the true Christ returns in the glory of His Father.

THE CHRIST OF HISTORY

But even if we accept the historical record about the Christ of the Bible, while we fail to receive Him in our hearts we have no hope of glory. Certainly we must believe in the Christ of history, but so long as He remains to us only an historical figure, we are still short of that experience which brings us the hope of glory.

THE CHRIST OF ETERNITY

We may even recognize, intellectually, Hebrews 13:8, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." and still fail to receive Him in our hearts. We must have more than a theoretical knowledge of Christ if we would have a hope of glory.

CHRIST THE SAVIOR

Again, a mere mental assent to the proposition that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world cannot avail in itself to put a hope of glory in our hearts. Many people speak of Him as Savior and profess to believe that He is the One and Only Savior, who yet lack the personal experience of receiving Him as the personal Savior of their individual souls.

CHRIST IN YOU

Our text calls our attention to the real existence of Christ within those who are really the children of God and can rightly hope for glory to come. This Christ within must be the same person as the Christ of history, the Christ of eternity, the Savior of the world, the same Christ that is revealed in the written word of God - but it is when He takes up His abode within us that He becomes our hope of glory.

A PERSONAL QUESTION

Thus, Christ our Savior, our hope of glory, is a personal Savior and saves men personally, individually. He is not the vague Christ of the social gospel or of other worldly religious systems. The question is personal. Do you know Him? Does He live in you? Christ in someone else provides no hope for you until you receive Him in your own heart.

John 1:12, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" If He is not dwelling in your heart, will you receive Him now, that for you, too, He may be the hope of glory?

CHAPTER XII

SAVED BY HIS LIFE

SINNERS ARE FIRST SAVED BY CHRIST'S DEATH THEN BY HIS LIFE

Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

A popular heresy of the day holds forth to lost sinners the vain hope of salvation from the life of Jesus by following His teachings and example. Promises of God to His own people are misinterpreted and misapplied to the lost, and so millions of souls try more or less sincerely to live what they consider a Christian life: and die in their sins because they have never come to believe the gospel.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the gospel is not the life of Jesus. The gospel is the good news I Corinthians 15:3-4, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:"

The idea that sinful man can reform his own character, or that by a process of culture or self discipline, even by imitating to the best of his ability the life of Jesus, he can save himself from moral ruin and eternal destruction, is a snare and delusion of Satan.

Hebrews 9:22, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission (forgiveness of sins)." Even so, Romans 5:10, "...we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,..."

So much to make clear that the promise, "we shall be saved by his life," is not to lost sinners but to sinners who have already been saved by His death. A careful reading of the context will make the meaning unmistakable.

"MUCH MORE"

Twice the inspired apostle declares that the future salvation of the saved is "much more" certain than their experience of salvation in the past; that the life of Christ will avail "much more" for the saved than the death of Christ for the lost.

Romans 5:8-10, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

HIS LIFE AS TEACHER

We shall be saved by His life as our teacher and example:

I Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:"

All the moral teachings and the perfect example of Jesus cannot save one lost sinner from eternal judgment, but sinners saved through faith in His blood find salvation from the power and practice of sin as they look to their living Lord and seek to follow His precepts and example.

HIS LIFE AS INTERCESSOR

We shall be saved by His life as our Advocate, our High Priest, our Intercessor:

I John 2:1, "...If any man (believer) sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"

Hebrews 7:25, "...he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

HIS LIFE AS LORD

We shall be saved by His life as Lord of all creation. He rules and overrules, and His purpose of salvation in our lives cannot be defeated by men or devils:

I Corinthians 15:25, "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

HIS LIFE IN SPIRIT

We shall be saved by His life within us, in the person of the Holy Spirit:

Colossians 1:27, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:"

Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

HIS LIFE IN RESURRECTION

We shall be saved by His life in the resurrection of our bodies:

John 11:25-26, "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Romans 6:5, "For

if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:"

Philippians 3:20-21, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

CHAPTER XIII

SAVED TO THE UTTERMOST

JESUS PROVIDES ETERNAL AND COMPLETE SALVATION NOTHING LESS CAN SATISFY OUR NEED

Hebrews 7:24-25, "But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Salvation must be either temporary or eternal, either partial or complete. Nominal Christians are divided in their opinions and testimony on this subject, although the Bible seems clear enough to anyone who is willing to believe what is written therein. It is a mystery to me how thousands of preachers can pride themselves on their "fundamentalism" while they brazenly deny the plain teachings of scripture on the eternal and complete salvation of the Lord freely given to its people.

JESUS SAVES COMPLETELY

"Save to the uttermost" - what does this mean?

Some have supposed it to mean to the uttermost place; that is, that Jesus saves sinners anywhere in the world when they come to God through Him. Of course, the Son of Man has power anywhere on earth to forgive sins Mark 2:10,

"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,... but that is not the meaning of our present text.

Others imagine a reference to the fact that Jesus is able to save the greatest sinner. This is a fact, but it has nothing to do with the text. The words are "to the uttermost," not "from the uttermost."

Nearer the truth is the interpretation "to the uttermost time," that is, for ever. This interpretation agrees with the context, "seeing he ever liveth," and is a reasonable interpretation of our English translation.

A fourth interpretation is "to the uttermost degree," and this is the meaning actually expressed by the Greek. We might well translate, "He is able to keep saving completely," since the present infinitive in the Greek shows continued action.

WHO INTERCEDES?

It is good to remember that our great Intercessor is the very same Saviour Who died on the cross for our sins. Romans 8:26, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Moreover, Christians should intercede for one another and for others, according to the inspired apostle I Timothy 2:1, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, inter-cessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;"

Nevertheless, all our interceding, and even that of the Holy Spirit, can avail only through the merits of the Son of God. I John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the right-eous."

The very Savior Who in His life fulfilled for us the righteousness of God's holy law and in His death shed His own blood for many for the remission of sins - this very Savior arose from the dead and now "ever liveth to make intercession" for us.

In short, Christ crucified paid for our salvation; Christ risen will surely collect what He paid for. He became our High Priest Hebrews 7:16, "...after the power of an endless life."

INTERCEDES WITH HIS FATHER

Infidels and ill instructed Christians have popularized a false view of God the Father as a personification of nothing but Justice and Vengeance, and of God the Son as a personification of nothing but Love and Mercy. In their evil thinking, God delights in the destruction and torment of sinners, and Jesus has a hard time and needs all the help we can give Him in slipping His people into heaven, almost against the Father's will. What nonsense! But infidels like to parade such bosh in their attempt to discredit Christianity among the "unlearned and

unstable." II Peter 3:16, "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Jesus said John 10:30, "I and my Father are one." There is no disagreement between them. I John 4:14, "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." Again, Jesus said, John 8:29 "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him." And again, in prayer, John 11:42, "...I knew that thou hearest me always:..."

So when Jesus intercedes with the Father for His people, He is in full accord with the Father's will: John 6:39-40, "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

INTERCEDES FOR WHOM?

"He is able to save completely those that come through him to God, since he always lives to intercede for them."

Jesus never promised to intercede for rebellious sinners who reject Him as Savior and try to save themselves by their "good" works, their religion, their prayers, or their tears. He lives to intercede for those that come through Him to God.

Millions of people believe in a temporary salvation because of the testimony of persons who claim to have been saved and afterward lost. They believe the testimony of false professors of Christianity instead of the testimony of God's word. But even if millions of millions of persons should testify that after Jesus had saved them they were afterward lost, and even if Jesus had said of His people only once, John 10:28, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." we should prefer to believe Him Who is the Truth incarnate.

Romans 3:4, "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the salvation of the Lord is for those who trust Him according to His word. Men willing to trust Him only for a partial or temporary salvation have no real faith in His promises. He offers complete and eternal salvation: is it wise or reasonable to expect or to be satisfied with anything less?

If we have come through Him to God, if we have trusted Jesus and Jesus alone to make us acceptable to God, then we can be sure that He always lives to intercede for us.

HOW DOES HE INTERCEDE?

Chapters 7 to 10 of Hebrews describe the ministry of Jesus as our High Priest. Excerpts follow:

Hebrews 7:26-27, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself."

Hebrews 9:24, "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:"

Hebrews 10:12-14, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Our great Intercessor has the perfect answer to every charge of Satan against God's elect: Guilty but paid for, and hence no longer guilty. We have already been punished in Christ; in Him we have already died to sin; God in justice will not punish us again. Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

WHY DOES HE INTERCEDE?

John 13:1, "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." In vain do we seek a reason for God's love toward us. Romans 5:8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Our salvation is due to no work of ours that God foreknew: II Timothy 1:9, "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,"

Why He loves us I do not know, but God does love His people with an everlasting love. Because of this love of God, unloving and unlovable as we are, our Savior Who died to redeem us lives to intercede in our behalf.

RESULT OF INTERCESSION

Carping critics will object that our text says only that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost: maybe He will not do so even though He can. Blasphemous rebels! Dare you call the Son of God a liar?

Jesus promised to every true believer everlasting life. Dare you say that this life will not last for ever?

God declares in His word: I John 5:4 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Dare you deny it?

The Holy Spirit through Paul wrote to believers: Colossians 2:10, "...ye are complete in him..." (Christ) Dare you doubt it.

That God in the Bible promises a complete and eternal salvation in Christ is beyond argument. To doubt that He gives it is to deny either His ability to give or His honesty in promising it. Our text declares that He is able. Dare you question His honesty?

Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

CHAPTER XIV

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

TRUE DISCIPLES CONTINUE IN HIS WORD AND FIND FREEDOM IN HIM

John 8:31-32, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Continuing in the word of the Lord is not a means or condition of attaining discipleship but is a test of genuine-ness of professed faith. The believers to whom Jesus was speaking in this text were not told to become His disciples by continuing in His word but that their continuing in His word would be proof that they were His disciples indeed. To such genuine disciples He gives the promise, "...ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

TRUTH INCARNATE

The truth that makes free is not the truth of arithmetic or the natural sciences or history or any such thing but the truth of God's word and particularly truth personified in Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus says, addressing the Father, John 17:17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In a measure the truth about Jesus as revealed in God's word will lead us toward freedom, but it is really Jesus Himself Who makes us free John 8:36, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

FREE FROM THE LAW

I John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin trans-gresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

That Jesus was promising to free men from the condemnation of God's holy Law that rests upon them because of their sins is evident: John 8:21,24, "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come...I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." We are told plainly Romans 6:14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Certainly this does not mean that believers in Christ are free from all moral responsibility to God, but it does mean that the penalty of the Law has been removed from us, having been laid upon Him Who died in our place.

Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

God has not cancelled or repealed His moral law; what He has done is to lay the penalty of violating the law upon His Son for those Who believe in Him. So David in the Old Testament and Paul in the New described Romans 4:6-8, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness with-out works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

FREE FROM DECEIT

Actually this freedom from the condemnation of the Law becomes ours the moment we believe in Christ unto salvation. As Jesus said, John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

But Satan, that old liar and father of lies, deceives his dupes and sometimes for a while God's own people are deceived and misled by the great deceiver. Of lost sinners it is often true that they would rather believe the lies of the Devil than the truth of God. So Jesus declared to unbelievers, John 8:45, "And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." We are warned of false Christs and false prophets Matthew 24:24, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

Yet, we may be sure that although believers in Christ may be temporarily deceived by Satan, ultimately, John 8:47, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." John 10:4-27, "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings. And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind? And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:"

How thankful we can be that in hearing and following Jesus we are set free from the cunning deceptions of Satan.

FREE FROM SIN

When the Jews denied their having been in bondage to any man, Jesus could have reminded them of some unpleasant historical facts, He was speaking of spiritual things John 8:34, "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant (slave) of sin." We are told in

Romans 6:18 that believers were "...made free from sin..." Certainly this does not mean that even the most faithful believer is perfectly rid of all sin in the flesh in this life. I John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It does mean that the power of sin is broken, that we are no longer in bondage to sin, Romans 6:18, "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." In the light of the New Testament the normal Christian life is not a life under the power of sin but a life of liberty taught and led by the Spirit of God. Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

FREE FROM FEAR

Jesus very well knew that Satan would threaten saved people with the loss of their salvation if they should fail to live up to their privileges and responsibilities, and so He gives us an abundance of clear and definite assurance that His salvation is an everlasting salvation that we need not fear losing.

John 8:35-36, "And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

Romans 8:15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

II Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

God will not have the hell-scared service of miserable religious slaves who fear that after all they may finally slip into Hell, but rather He delights in the happy service of children who love and trust Him and rejoice in the security of eternal life.

FREE FROM TROUBLE

For those who are His disciples indeed, the Lord Jesus as Truth incarnate gives assurance not only of freedom from the penalty of God's holy Law, freedom from Satan's deception, freedom from the power of sin, and freedom from fear of losing the blessings of salvation once received, but also the assurance of freedom in the life to come, from all the sins, sorrows and troubles of this present evil world. So He tells us: John 14:1-2, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."

We are given a glimpse of this place prepared for God's people and of conditions that will prevail. Revelation 21:4, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

FREEDOM FOR YOU

Are you still a slave to sin and Satan or have you found for yourself something of "the glorious liberty of the children of God"?

This freedom can be yours by simple trusting faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

CHAPTER XV

PEACE IN CHRIST

REAL AND LASTING PEACE WITH GOD CAN BE FOUND ONLY IN THE PRINCE OF PEACE

John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Even as these lines are being written, clouds of war and destruction circle the earth, nations are rising against nations, and weapons of unprecedented and unimaginable power are in the hands of the greedy, conscienceless dictators determined on domination or destruction of the world. Our nation's president urges our citizens to build bomb or fallout shelters, while a former president is quoted as saying that he would prefer to die with his kindred and friends.

THE END - NOT YET

Luke 21:26, "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Dictators and slaves, statesmen, generals and common citizens, are alike fearful and uncertain of the future.

The one certainty seemingly agreed upon by all is that the bloodshed and desolation of previous wars are as nothing when compared with the world wide devastation that may come upon us at any moment: such are the fearful expectations of men.

Our Lord warned of such times: Mark 13:7, "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet."

So the warnings of God's word confirm the opinions of men that the end is not yet.

ORIGIN OF WARS

However, when we inquire as to the reasons and sources of the wars and other conflicts among men and nations, God reveals the truth men generally refuse to face: James 4:1-2, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain:..."

Politicians, generals, and historians may speak and write words without end in attempted explanation of rivalry and strife between men and nations, but the simple truth is that fights begin when one man lusts for what is rightfully another's and wars are the result of the overwhelming desire of a nation or a nation's rulers to grab the possessions of other nations.

This simple tale of lust let loose is nothing new in the world's history. But it has come upon us on a larger scale and with greater potentialities for destruction than ever before.

WAR AGAINST GOD

Continuing the quotation from James "...ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not."

That is to say, fights and wars arise because sinful man is at enmity with his Creator to the extent that instead of asking God for needed blessings, he tries to snatch the blessings of the Creator from his fellow creatures.

Back of all enmity between men is the enmity of man against God. Paul had reference to this fact Romans 5:10, "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." Again in Ephesians 2:3, we are told that we "...were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The Bible plainly teaches that the settled disposition of mankind is a disposition of enmity against God.

If we are frightened by the prospect of attack by human enemies with weapons of human invention, how much more do we need to fear the judgment of God, the all-wise, all-mighty, eternal Creator, as He carries out the promise of His word to crush His enemies under His feet. Surely Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge:..."

PEACE WITH GOD

Yet God has provided for the making of peace in the person of His Son. Ephesians 2:14, "...he is our peace,..." This peace with God which transcends all earthly strife is obtained by faith: Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:"

PEACE OF GOD

Not only do believers in Jesus Christ have peace with God, having turned from rebellion against God, but as children of God, Philippians 4:7, "...the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

The true child of God can enjoy a peace of mind, heart, and conscience which no disturbance or strife of this world can touch.

NOT AS THE WORLD

John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

So the peace we are talking about is not the sort of troubled peace, the sort of armed truce, a mere time of preparation for greater conflict, such as this world knows. Real peace requires the removal of the causes of conflict, and this kind of peace a world of wicked, greedy men cannot attain.

NOT PACIFISM

The peace we have in Christ is far from the hypocritical pacifism of "conscientious objectors." It is not obtained by pretending a peace that does not exist or by ignoring principles of truth and justice. The Christian's peace with God, far from teaching him to submit to wickedness, will make him so much the bolder in defense of the liberties and safety of his loved ones even as he learns to avenge not himself.

NOT COMPROMISE

As our peace with God in Christ is not attained by compromise but by surrendering all that is evil in our lives, in exchange for all that is good in the life of Christ given to us, so the expression of this peace in our earthly relations is not to be found in a spirit of compromise with the ways or with the powers of this world.

Compromise is never an end of strife. It settles nothing; it provides only an interlude wherein one or the other if not both of the conflicting parties may prepare for a more decisive conflict.

THROUGH VICTORY

As it is true of any enduring peace on an earthly plane that compromise settles nothing, but a decisive victory in war settles the question of which is the

stronger power, at least for the time being, so the peace that is ours in Christ is the result of His overwhelming and eternal victory over all the powers of evil.

John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

In the world's history, a mighty nation may defeat all opponents in one war only to be defeated in turn in later years. But in the conflict between God and Satan, the victory of our Lord is for ever.

LASTING PEACE

Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Whatever troubled peace we may experience for a few days or a few years in this present evil world, the people of God, according to His promises, await the second coming of the Prince of Peace, Who will rule the nations with a rod of iron Psalms 46:9, "He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;..."

CHAPTER XVI

DIMENSIONS OF LOVE

A PRAYER FOR KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST'S LOVE WHICH PASSES KNOWLEDGE

Ephesians 3:14-21, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 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, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Here we have what may be called four dimensions of divine love, expressing something of the magnitude of that love in space, time, and eternity. The apostle's prayer was not only for the church at Ephesus but that this church might comprehend "with all saints," thus bringing all the redeemed of God within

the desire of His heart here declared. Surely we need to have the same desire in our hearts for ourselves and for all saints of God that we may comprehend the dimensions of the love of Christ and know that love which passeth knowledge.

ROOTED AND GROUNDED

Only those who are themselves rooted and grounded in love can possibly have any spiritual comprehension of the love here described. The word "rooted" suggests that the very origin of our life and all its sustenance is in the love of God from which we spring and grow as a plant is enabled to live and grow by being rooted in fertile soil. The word "grounded" in this text means founded or set on a foundation and reminds us that the spiritual building of our life is founded or established upon the solid rock of God's love in Christ.

ABLE TO TAKE DOWN

The prayer that we "may be able to comprehend" means that we may be strengthened to receive or take down into our minds and hearts the dimensions of the love of Christ as this love is revealed in the word of God and in our experience in partaking of His love.

BREADTH OF LOVE

In a sense, the attributes of the infinite God may be said to be infinite, because they are certainly beyond our power to measure. Yet, we must recognize that God is consistent with Himself, and, therefore, any one attribute of deity is necessarily limited to consistency with other attributes. So we are not to imagine that God is all love or nothing but love: He is also a God of justice and truth Who hates sin and cannot look upon iniquity.

The breadth of God's love in effecting the salvation of sinners is, in a sense, narrow, so that Jesus admonishes: Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter ye in at the strait (narrow) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait (narrow) is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Nevertheless, the love of God is so broad that Matthew 5:45, "...he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Moreover, the love of Christ in salvation is not limited to any race, nation, or station in this world, Acts 10:34-35, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

The breadth of this love, wide enough to cover believers of all nations, is shown in John's vision of the redeemed in heaven: Revelation 7:9, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

LENGTH OF LOVE

It is probable that by length the apostle refers to the duration of the divine love in time and eternity. Human love may wax and wane, but the love of God is constant and unchanging.

We read of Jesus' love for His disciples. John 13:1, "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Actually, the love of God for His people reaches from eternity past to eternity future (if we can rightly speak of past and future in eternity), Jeremiah 31:3, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

To suppose that God could ever stop loving us is to suppose a change in His character, because we who have been made partakers of His divine nature can never become as unworthy of His love as we were when He saved us.

DEPTH OF LOVE

The depth of Christ's love was revealed in His descent from heaven to earth that He might be Isaiah 53:12, "...numbered with the transgressors;...."

His love was deep enough to bring Him down to where we were in the utmost degradation of sin. Only as we become partakers of His holiness and learn to hate sin as he hates it can we begin to understand how deep that was.

Yet, there is no sinner so vile, so far sunk in the depths of sin, but that the love of Christ can reach and save him.

I Timothy 1:15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

Our Lord warns of only one sin that will never be forgiven, and that is, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The reason that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not forgiven is simply that the sinner hardened to the extent of such blasphemy will never repent.

However great may be your sin, however deep you may have fallen in rebellion against God, if you will repent and trust in Jesus, His love is deep enough to save you.

HEIGHT OF LOVE

Just as the love of Christ was deep enough to bring Him down to earth, yea, even to send Him to Hades that He might lead captivity captive, so His love is high enough to lift us up to heaven.

The height of God's love appears in His dealing with His children in this present life. He loves us too much to allow us to continue on the low levels of sin and disobedience. Hebrews 12:6-10, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

We shall never explore the full height of Christ's love for us until we come to the fulfillment of His promise: Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

If anyone asks how many of God's children will overcome, we have the answer: I John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

KNOWING LOVE

The prayer is that we may "know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." That is, it is only in degree, in part, that we may know this love which, in its fullness, surpasses knowledge. We may be sure that whatever breadth, length, depth, and height we may have explored, God has still further reaches of love beyond our kin.

Finally, lest we abandon hope of learning even any considerable measure of God's love, the apostle reminds us that God Ephesians 3:20, "...is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...."

May His Spirit illuminate our minds, overflow our hearts, and lead our lives in this love of Christ.

CHAPTER XVII

WHATSOEVER HE SAYS

WE NEED TO OBEY THE COMMANDS OF JESUS HERE ARE A FEW REASONS

John 2:5, "His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

The words of our text were spoken by Mary, the mother of Jesus (not the "Mother of God," as Catholics blasphemously call her). The occasion was a marriage in Cana, when they ran out of wine at the feast. Mary officiously mentioned the shortage to Jesus, and was deservedly rebuked, Douay footnote to the contrary notwithstanding. She quickly learned her lesson and gave some good advice to the servants. We can imagine (the scripture does not tell us this) that they might have made the mistake of telling their need to Mary instead of Jesus. Now she tells them: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

MISDIRECTED PRAYER

If Mary in heaven today is aware of the prayers made to her by multiplied millions of poor blinded sinners who "worship the creature more than the Creator," and if it is possible for a Christian to be grieved in heaven, she must be greatly grieved. And if she could speak today in the ears of these idolaters, she would surely tell them, as she told these servants in Cana, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

This is good advice for anyone, any time. So, leaving the context, let us first examine the words of the text, and then think of a few reasons why we need to do what Jesus says.

"WHATSOEVER"

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Many people are willing to do some things that Jesus says, but they insist on their right to choose which commandments they consider important or practical and to ignore the rest. This is not obedience at all. It amounts to no more than quoting Jesus as authority for what we want to do anyway, and would do if we had never heard of Him.

We have no right to decide which of His command-ments we shall obey, which are practical, which are profit-able, which are "reasonable." If He tells us to do a thing, anything; that fact in itself is reason enough. We are to do whatsoever He says.

"HE"

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Not what someone else says. Not what parents say, not what some preacher says, not what some church says, not what custom or tradition says. If any or all of these agree with Jesus, thank God for it; but if they disagree; we are still to do what Jesus says. Acts 5:29, "Then

Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

"SAITH"

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Not what we might suppose He would want us to do, but what He says. Jesus speaks to us:

1. In His own words and example. We have recorded in the New Testament many words which He spake in person while He was on earth in the flesh. I Peter 2:21, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:" Our standard of conduct is to be nothing less than the life of Jesus Himself, and we are to do exactly as He says.

2. In the Scriptures. Jesus quoted from and recognized the Old Testament as the Word of God. He said: John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." And He promised that the Holy Spirit would complete the revelation of truth that the disciples were not yet able to bear. Those people greatly err who suppose that other inspired scripture is of less authority than the quoted words of Jesus. Writing by inspiration, Paul said: I Corinthians 14:37, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

3. In the Holy Spirit. God is one, and Jesus is with His people in the person of the Holy Spirit. Here we need to be cautious. I John 4:1, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." God cannot lie; He cannot deny Himself. Jesus will not tell us something now in the Holy Spirit contrary to what He has already told us in the Scriptures. But we do need the Holy Spirit to give us understanding of what is written and to enable us to make the proper application. Jesus continually speaks to His people through the Holy Spirit, and when we go astray it is because we are unwilling to listen and to do what He says.

"UNTO YOU"

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Don't worry over what He may say to someone else. Too many of us want to mind everybody's business but our own. Some of God's commandments are for universal application; others are not. Don't think that everyone else must do everything that God tells you to do. You will have your hands full if you just try to do what He tells you. John 21:18-22, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God.

And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me." I Corin-thians 12:4-11, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of adminis-trations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Romans 14:1-13, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." There is room for infinite variety in God's creation. Be content to find the Lord's will for you, and then do it.

"DO"

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Not just think about it, not argue about it, not find some excuse to avoid it, but--do it.

"IT"

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." That is, do what He says, not something else that you think might do just as well. For instance, sprinkling and pouring are not baptism. Follow the example and command of Jesus in all things. Substituting something else is not obedience. When Jesus told those servants to fill the waterpots, that is exactly what they did. They did not just wet them with a little water. They did not just make them half full, or three quarters full. John 2:7, "...they filled them up to the brim." Do exactly what Jesus tells you to do.

WHY?

Is it really so important to do what Jesus says? Yes, it is. Why? Let us note just a few reasons:

JUDGMENT TO COME

Romans 2:6, God "Who will render to every man according to his deeds:" Lost sinners will be punished forever in hell and in the lake of fire, the degree of their punishment being proportioned to the enormity of their disobedience. John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." On the other hand Christians will be judged for rewards, and will be rewarded according to their works.

So we ought to obey Jesus because we shall have to render an account to God. If we are Christians, our standing in eternity depends upon our obedience here: Matthew 5:19, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

CHASTISEMENT

Hebrews 12:6, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Luke 12:47-48, "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

If we are God's children, we had better do what He says, or He will surely Psalm 89:32, "...visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."

FELLOWSHIP AND BLESSINGS

I John 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." We cannot, as Christians, have the joy of His fellowship except as we walk in the light of His word, that is, do what He says. We sing truly: "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey."

If we would obtain His blessings, if we would have our prayers answered, we must obey Him. Too often we shut our ears against God and then vainly expect Him to open His ears to us. Prayer does not work that way. We must listen to God if we want Him to listen to us. I John 3:22, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

REASON AND CONSCIENCE

We need to do what Jesus says because, if we are Christians, our own reason will tell us that we owe Him unquestioning obedience, and that this is the only way we can keep a clear conscience. We are not our own, we are bought with a price, and our service rightfully belongs to Jesus.

Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Acts 24:16, Paul said to Felix: "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."

John reminds us: I John 3:20, "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

If we belong to Jesus, then He has the right to command, and our duty is simply to obey. Both by creation and by redemption we do rightfully belong to Him. It is reasonable and right that we should do what He says.

LOVE

But above all and in and through all other reasons, we ought to obey Jesus because we love Him. II Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:" I John 4:19, "We love him because he first loved us." John 8:42, "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me." And to His disciples John 14:23, "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Is Jesus really your Lord, and do you really love Him?

Luke 6:46, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

John 14:21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

"Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it"

CHAPTER XVIII

MY YOKE IS EASY MY BURDEN IS LIGHT

THE CHRISTIAN'S BURDEN IS LIGHT JUST BECAUSE HE IS YOKED WITH CHRIST

Matthew 11:29-30, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The invitation and assurance given in these verses are for those who have accepted the invitation of verse 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus invites lost souls to come to Him, that is, to believe in Him, for salvation, or to obtain the rest. Hebrews 4:10, "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." This means that we get saved when we simply trust Jesus and cease from our own works. Then in our text (Matthew 11:29-30) Jesus invites us that are saved to take up His work, to wear His yoke, and find further rest in serving with and learning from Him.

HIS YOKE - HIS BURDEN

I think that the secret of finding this "rest for our souls" even as we bear the burden of a figurative yoke, paradoxically, is in remembering that Jesus calls it "My yoke," "My burden."

Of course, He means the yoke that He wears and asks us to share, the burden that He carries of which He asks us who are His disciples to carry a small part.

But it is still His yoke, His burden; and so, no matter how heavy it may be on Him, He can still assure us that for us it is easy, it is light: He can make it so for us, for it is His.

JUDGMENT

The heaviest burden that can rest upon a human soul (though the lost soul may not realize it until he wakes up in hell) is God's judgment against sin and sinners. But for the children of God this soul-crushing burden, for legal purposes, was laid upon Christ, and so we are free from the law.

II Corinthians 5:21, God "...hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Such judgment as remains for a Christian to bear in this life is the loving discipline of our heavenly Father designed for our correction. At the judgment seat of Christ we shall be judged for rewards for faithful service. But the legal punishment for our sins was laid upon Christ, John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

FEAR

II Timothy 1:7, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Hebrews 13:6, "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me."

Hebrews 2:14,15, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Among the most encouraging words of Jesus to His disciples was the simple and oft-repeated admonition, "Fear not." The fearful Christian is a disobedient Christian and is far from perfected in that love which casts out fear.

Surely, as imperfect followers of a perfect Master we need to have a Godly fear. But this is a light burden in comparison with the grievous fear of death, the fear of eternal judgment, and even the fear of man, which our Lord has lifted from us.

RELIGION

Some of the heaviest burdens that men carry in this world are religious burdens. Even the detailed laws and ceremonial regulations of Moses, though given by divine direction, and far less burdensome than the bonds and shackles of heathen religions, were yet too heavy for anyone except Jesus to carry through to fulfillment.

And so when the Judaizers sought to bring Gentile Christians under the ceremonial law, Peter asked the question, Acts 15:10, "...why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

The religious yoke which Jesus calls us to wear is not a burdensome yoke of ritualism and ceremony, but of willing, loving, and joyful service. Galatians 5:6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." II Corinthians 9:8, "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:"

TEMPTATIONS

Too many Christians forget to pray as Jesus commanded, "Lead us not into temptation," and then complain about their many trials and temptations, which they might have avoided if they had been "instant in prayer."

I Corinthians 10:13, Even so, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

AFFLICTIONS

How many of us have learned to Romans 5:3, "...glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;" as part of normal Christian experience.

For an example of one disciple who learned this lesson, Paul tells us: II Corinthians 12:7-9, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." It was God's will rather that the apostle should learn to bear his affliction.

DEATH

Even death, the last enemy to be destroyed, has lost part of its sting: I Corinthians 15:55-57, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death is therefore a far lighter burden for Christians than for the lost.

So with reference to the death of our loved ones we are admonished: I Thessalonians 4:13, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." And when we ourselves come to meet this appointment we can say with David as with all true saints, Psalm 23:1-6, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

WORRY

It seems sometimes that Christians who have the lightest burdens to worry about worry the most. Yet our Lord commands us again and again to take no anxious thought for tomorrow, to let not our hearts be troubled, to be careful for nothing (that is, not to worry about anything.)

Perhaps one of the most foolish and sinful habits of otherwise intelligent creatures is the habit of worry. This habit is foolish for anybody and especially sinful for a Christian, who is supposed to have learned to trust Christ. Again we need to remember that our yoke is His, our burden is His.

It is no accident that Peter by inspiration couples humility with freedom from worry or care. When analyzed, all our anxieties come from the pride of hearts not fully surrendered to God's will.

I Peter 5:6-7, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care (worry) upon him; for he careth for you."

THE HEAVY END

I can remember that as a child I sometimes wanted to help my father or an older brother carry a piece of lumber when, of course, a little boy would be more hindrance than help. But sometimes the adult would take hold of a piece of lumber near the middle or of the heavy end of a rail or post and let me take the light end, bearing little or no weight in my hands. So with our being yoked with Jesus: for us His yoke is easy, His burden is light, because He carries the heavy end.

CHAPTER XIX

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

CHRISTIANS ARE DESTINED TO BECOME LIKE CHRIST FULFILLING OUR DESTINY

Romans 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

II Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

To be like Jesus -- surely this is the heart's desire of all true Christians. Even the world that rejects His authority pays lip service to the excellence of His character. The governor who sent Him to the cross did so after declaring three times, John 18:38, 19:4-6, "Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all...Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him." The centurion and other soldiers who crucified Him and watched Him die exclaimed: Matthew 27:54, "Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." And by His resurrection He was indeed Romans 1:4, "...declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:" To be like Him - this is our desire, this is our hope, this is our destiny - if He is our Savior -- to be like Him!

A "LAW OF RELIGION"

We may safely state it as a law of religion that man becomes like the God or gods that he worships.

If he worships false gods, he becomes like them, because he has created or adopted gods of such character as he most desires for himself, and consciously or unconsciously he takes on the character of his gods.

Psalm 135:15-18, "The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them."

On the other hand, when we truly worship the true God, we become II Peter 1:4, "...partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

AFTER HIS IMAGE

We learn from the Bible that man was created in the image of God Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." This image was soon destroyed by sin. It is God's redemptive purpose in a new creation to bring Hebrews 2:10, "...many sons unto glory." all of whom shall be Romans 8:29, "...conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

This conformation or transformation is begun in the new birth:

II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The saints are said to Colossians 3:10, "...have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

Faith in Christ - looking to Him as the ancient Israelites looked to the brazen serpent - is God's appointed means of effecting this renewal in knowledge after His image.

John 3:14-15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

WITH UNVEILED FACE

Now, our second text with context (II Corinthians 3:7-18) tells us that the transformation of character begun in the new birth is continued also by means of our looking to the very Savior to Whom we looked at the beginning of our Christian life:

II Corinthians 3:7-18, "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: But their

minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The "open face," more accurately translated "unveiled face," alludes to the veil of unbelief which is taken from the heart when it turns to the Lord (verse 16). We are also to remove the veil from our faces, so as to reflect outwardly the glory received within (compare verses 12 and 13.)

BEHOLDING HIS GLORY

With the translation "beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord," the "mirror" is the Bible. Here it is that we must find the true character of our Lord. Many and varied are the counterfeit "Christs" of human imagination and devilish invention. Away with them! Let us look to the Christ of the Bible.

John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; (said Jesus) for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Christians with false ideas about Christ cannot expect to be transformed, into the image of the true Christ. It is only as we behold Him clearly reflected in the mirror of the written word of God that we "are transformed into the same image."

REFLECTING HIS GLORY

However, instead of the translation, "beholding as in a mirror," it is possible to translate, "reflecting as in a mirror," and this, too, makes good Bible sense. It is as we reflect the glory of the Lord for others to see (verse 12) that we ourselves continue to be transformed into His image.

James was teaching something like this when he wrote: James 1:22-25, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

Likewise Jesus commanded Matthew 5:16 13:12, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven...For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

In our Christian life in this world, our transformation into the likeness of Christ is a gradual growth of the life begun in regeneration. So we are said to be changed into His image "from glory to glory," that is, from one degree of glory to another.

We usually think of glory only in connection with the beauty, splendor and magnificence of heaven and of a future manifestation of the kingdom of heaven on earth. But John tells us of Jesus when He was on earth. John 1:14,16, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth...And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

So, even in this life, God imparts to us some of the fulness of our glorious Lord. I Corinthians 11:7, "For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man."

I Corinthians 1:31, "That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, (boasteth) let him glory in the Lord." Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, (said Paul) save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Christ living within us, as He is our hope of "glory" to come. Colossians 1:27, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:" This is also our true glory here and now, in proportion as we make room for him in our hearts: Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM

Yet, even as the glory of Moses' face faded out in comparison with the exceeding glory of the gospel ministry (II Corinthians 3:7-10), so the too dim reflection of the life of Christ in the earthly lives of His people will fade away in the light of His perfect glory in the resurrection of our bodies.

I Corinthians 15:40, "There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another."

I John 3:2-3, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

CHAPTER XX

HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

A LIFELONG JOB FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN OFFERING LIFE TO THE DEAD

Philippians 2:14-16, "Do all things without mur-murings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

"Holding forth the word of life" - what a wonderful privilege, and withal what a weighty responsibility, is this! And if we who are "the sons of God" fail in this, then, so far as we are concerned, not only Paul, but all those saints of God that God used through the centuries to bring His word down to us, have, for us, run and labored in vain. This is rather our loss than theirs: they were faithful, as is evidenced by our receiving the word; but how will our record appear at the judgment seat of Christ?

WHAT WORD OF LIFE?

In I John 1:1 the phrase, "Word of life," evidently refers to Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, the Son of God, Who has life in Himself as the Father has life in Himself. John 1:1-14, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the dark-ness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth;" John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" But here in Philippians the reference is apparently to the written word of God; perhaps especially to the life-giving message (the gospel) of this written word.

Yet, important as this distinction is, it is not absolute.

LANGUAGE AND FLESH

The Bible is God's word in human language: Jesus Christ is God's Word in human flesh. We do not know or understand the Bible until we find the Christ there revealed; we can have no true knowledge of Christ except through the message of the Bible.

John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

So the "word of life" to be held forth is the written word of God, but in holding forth this message we are telling the world of the Christ Who is mighty to save: shining "as lights in the world" John 1:4, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men."

THE LIVING WORD

Why is the Bible called "the word of life"? Surely this description of God's written word is no accident, but is meant for our spiritual instruction.

One thought immediately suggested is that the mere survival of the Bible through thousands of years, despite the attacks of men and devils, despite the general lukewarm-ness of its friends, and despite the nibbling of destructive critics, is evidence of life in the word.

UP TO DATE

But not only has the Bible survived: though the oldest book in the world, it is also the most up-to-date. Try to read the ancient writings of the world's religions -- they are almost unreadable because their thought is far removed from the realities of modern life. Not so with the Bible: it is more widely read and enjoyed now than ever before: for all its age, it wears the bloom of youth.

Some of the old classics of human literature show an amazing vitality of sustained interest; even in translation they are studied and sometimes enjoyed by a few students in generations many centuries removed from their authors. But these classics are not worthy to be compared with the Bible, which has been read and preached in more than a thousand tongues, and appeals not only to a few students of ancient literature but to millions of souls in real life.

DEALS WITH LIFE

The Bible is the word of life and is of interest to living people because it deals with life, the troubles, sorrows, and joys of life, the needs and problems of life, the possibilities, hopes, and aspirations of life.

Even men whose life is only on the natural plane, with no spiritual understanding, are attracted by the revelation of human nature and the timely, practical wisdom found in the Bible. Biblical characters are true-to-life characters,

and the so-called "realism" of human literature is artificial and anemic when compared to the matter-of-fact narrative of the Bible.

ETERNAL LIFE

But the Bible is the word of life also because it tells us of spiritual and eternal life - life of which man by nature has some vague and degenerated consciousness, but of which we can really know nothing except as we learn from the revelation of God's word.

On the highest plane, the Bible is the word of life because it reveals Him Who is John 14:6, "...the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

The modernist who pays lip service to Jesus Christ while he denies the absolute truth of His written word is trying to destroy our only reliable source of knowledge about Him. God has given us an inspired record, and we can know Whom we have believed.

Finally, the Bible is the word of life because it is the instrument used by God the Holy Spirit to bring spiritually dead sinners to new life in Christ.

James 1:18, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures."

I Peter 1:23, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

HOLDING FORTH

Some translators render our text "holding to" or "holding fast" the word of life. It is true that the Greek word can be so translated, and true also that we cannot effectively hold forth to others a message that we have not held fast ourselves. Moreover, we are not really holding to the word of life if we fail to hold it forth in obedience to our Lord's command to preach the gospel to every creature.

Yet the context supports the King James version here: it is in "holding forth the word of life," in offering spiritual light to others, that we "shine as lights in the world."

IN THE CHURCH

Remember that Paul was writing to Philippians 1:1, "...the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:" that is, to the church at Philippi. And so every New Testament church, in its every program, agency, and activity, is to be holding forth the word of life.

IN PERSONAL TESTIMONY

But a church is made up of members, and each member has his personal responsibility. Some things the church can or must do as a body, and in these things one member may have a small part. But he has still a personal testimony to bear that no one else can bear for him. We are to hold forth the word of life in private conversation as well as in public worship.

IN CONDUCT

Holding forth the word of life with our lips, however, is of little worth if our conduct belies our speech. Actions speak louder than words. Philippians 2:14, "DO ALL THINGS without murmurings and disputings:"

On the human side, the greatest need of the world today is individual Christians who will courage-ously and consistently "hold forth the word of life" in their daily conduct, in their personal testimony, and in the corporate work of true churches of our Lord and Savior, Who has given us the light of life for the express purpose that we should "shine as lights in the world."

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