

LOVE BUILDS UP

A Simple Score of Short Sermons

Addressed to Saints and Sinners

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"Better Than the Angels"

"Following Holiness"

"Christ's Church and Baptism"

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PREFACE

The first sermon in this book was abridged from transcription; the others were written for publication in limited space: hence some difference in style. A few sermons written some twenty years ago are included in this selection along with others of recent date, for I have found no reason to change my message as a minister of the word of God. Whether I am "in a rut" or "in the groove" the reader may judge, though my chief concern is with a higher judgment.

I am aware that some of the subjects touched upon here are quite controversial and that my treatment of them will not endear me to many beloved brethren. But my Lord and Savior has always been a subject of controversy since He walked in Galilee, and the word of God has been in dispute since the Serpent introduced doubt in the Garden. Nevertheless, I have tried to "speak the truth in love," and can only hope that, so far as I have succeeded, the reader may be able to receive it.

For any errors in this book, the fault is mine: I must beg the patience and indulgence of my readers and the forgiveness and correction of my God. For the truth presented, I can claim no credit: I found it all in another Book; and there is much more to draw from in that Book of books. That my feeble efforts may serve to help each reader to a better acquaintance with that Book and its Author is the sincere hope and prayer of

ROSCO BRONG

To a brother great in the faith, CLARENCE WALKER, this book is dedicated as a small contribution to the cause of Christ our Savior.

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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Dr. Brong's work at Lexington Baptist College has included the teaching of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. His knowledge of the Biblical languages has proven to be of great value in scriptural exposition and interpretation.

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Chapter I

LOVE BUILDS UP

BIBLICAL COMPARISON OF LEARNING AND LOVE SHOWS THAT LOVE IS BETTER

I Corinthians 8:1, "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have know-ledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

"...Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth." Let us put that into modern language: learning puffs up but love builds up. I keep preaching this text to myself. I need it whether anyone else does or not. It may sound a little strange in connection with a program designed to promote the work of a school where we are very much concerned about teaching the truths of God's Word, helping people to come to a fuller knowledge of these truths - it may sound a little strange for the dean of the school to depart from that line and point out that there is something a little more important than knowing the truth - something that is to be added to knowledge of the truth and something without which any knowledge that we might have of the truth is all in vain.

A BIG DIFFERENCE

"Learning (knowledge) puffs up but love builds up." The difference is that between blowing up a balloon and building a solid house. To blow up a balloon as big as a house, all you need is some hot air or any kind of gas. But it takes quite a bit of more substantial material if you are going to build a house, and there is a difference in the product. A house that is well built of good material will stand. But if we have blown up a balloon all it takes is a good pinprick and there it was!

I have found in my own experience that it is very easy to acquire a little more knowledge than I have had previously and get to thinking, "Boy, now, that is great! I know that now!" And I start getting puffed up and get to thinking I know more than I do. But, thank the Lord, He knows how to use the pin. So it usually does not last long.

I have met some people, however, that remind me of some of these modern automobile tires that have self-sealers in them, you know. And they can pick up a nail and punch a hole but they have some sort of goo in there that fills up the hole, and you can hardly make them flat at all because that goo just fills up the hole, and holds the air.

So even some balloons under such circumstances are hard to deflate. But there is still a big difference between a puffing up of knowledge and the building or edifying that is done by love.

PRIDE IN ACHIEVEMENT

Now, I can think of at least four good reasons why knowledge puffs up, why people are prone to get the big head when they learn a little something. I wish I could say that none of our students are ever afflicted with that sort of disease, but I would not be completely honest, I am afraid they are just human. And having confessed that I have been subject to the disease myself I don't suppose it will hurt anybody's feelings if I have to comment that most other people I have known have made the same mistake.

We are prone to become puffed up by knowledge, for one reason, because we think that we have accomplished something, or that knowledge is an achievement. We think of knowledge as something that we have worked at and studied and thought out. And so we have a tendency to think ourselves superior to others who from laziness or indifference, or sometimes from lack of opportunity, have not acquired knowledge that we have, even in the natural knowledge of this world.

On every hand we see educated fools that think they know it all, and that somebody that has not been to school and got the degrees and "culture" of formal education; they think that this person is something to be looked down on. Yet with the same opportunities he might have gone as far or farther in that education.

GIFTS OF GOD

But above all things, when we come to the knowledge of divine truth; when we come to the knowledge of God; we who believe in the doctrine of grace and the greatness of God that these brethren have been preaching to us and that are in accord with the truths, the revelation of God's Word; we are the last people in the world that ought to get stuck on ourselves for knowing some things that some other people don't know. Where did we get it?

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, I Corinthians 4:7, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" As if you had thought it out all by yourself!

Jesus said in John 6:45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

The inspired apostle said, I Corinthians 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Well, then, you and I did not receive them naturally either. You and I received them by the grace of God. What do we have to brag about?

Why should we get puffed up because we know, or think we know, more of the doctrine of God's grace, more of the grace of God and more of the truths

of His Word than somebody else? That is nothing to get puffed up about. It is something to be thankful for, something that ought to humble us, as Bro. Hamilton has pointed out. The only way you and I learned it was that God in His grace reached down to where we were, gave us a mind and an understanding that we did not have in ourselves. And other people can learn it as easily as we did when God does that for them. What do we have to brag about?

DESPISING THE WEAK

And then, knowledge puffs up sometimes because, as we say, knowledge is power, and we tend to despise the weak. Again, this is true in natural knowledge also, that the learned in the various professions or occupations in this world seem to be a little condescending to those who are unacquainted with the technicalities of these various occupations.

So with the knowledge of God's Word, this knowledge is power, if we know how to use it. The right knowledge of God's Word may save us from much error. Remember, the Sadducees came to Jesus on one occasion and asked a ridiculous question as to the resurrection. They did not believe in the resurrection to begin with. Mark 12:24, "And Jesus answering said unto them, Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?" Not knowing, you see.

But again, if God has given us some knowledge of the scriptures, delivered us from some error, that is nothing for us to get puffed up about. The same Word is there, the same truth is there for anybody else to learn. But you and I did not learn it, except as God provided guidance and instruction, perhaps through other human instruments, and the leading and illumination of His Spirit in bringing us to know these truths of His Word. What are we puffed up about?

PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE

Thirdly, knowledge puffs up sometimes because human knowledge is partial and we have a tendency to think it is complete. When we get a vague idea about something we think we know all about it.

This is an especially dangerous thing in dealing with the truths of God's word. And this is one of the things that we have been plagued with now and then here in our school. Oh, I am sure it is not a problem peculiar to this school! But somebody gets a little bit of truth that he never saw before and he has made a world shaking discovery, to him. Maybe what he has discovered is true as far as it goes. That is, it is part of a truth. But to him it is the most important thing in the world and it comes to be about the only thing that is in the Bible.

He is all puffed up because he knows something nobody else knows - he thinks. A little child says, "I know something I won't tell," but here is a man that cannot tell anything else. And he is all puffed up because he has that little

fragment of truth, which is true maybe as far as it goes, but it is a partial truth. And he is puffed up.

Now if he would get a good look in the Bible and a good overall view of all the teachings of the Bible he would be somewhat deflated. He would find out that he does not know as much as he thinks he knows. But knowledge tends to puff up because of the fact that being human we are prone to think that our partial knowledge is complete knowledge. Paul reminds us, I Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

SUPERFICIALITY

My fourth point may sound like the third, but it is really a little bit different. We are prone to mistake a superficial knowledge for the real thing. We are prone to mistake a theory for reality.

James 2:19, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble." So he indicates that just believing something about the character of God is not enough. And I dare to say that even knowing Bible doctrine about God is a different thing from knowing God. But we have a tendency to mistake the superficial for the reality, the theory for the fact. And so we get puffed up and think we know more than we really know.

Now this brings us to the second part of my text. And I want to tie in with this an extraordinary statement from I John 4:8, a very simple statement. It is not hard to understand, it may be hard to take, but it is not hard to understand: "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

Now, that is a flat statement, isn't it? John has a way of making some flat statements throughout that epistle - some of them rather striking. And if we have not learned to love, this statement of God's Word says, we do not know God yet. We have not gotten acquainted with God. Talk about hard doctrine; that is hard doctrine!

I John 4:8, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." God's word puts love higher on the scale of spiritual value than knowledge. Colossians 3:9-11, "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." So Paul tells us that if we are really among the saints of God then the image of God is renewed in us. And that renovation is a renewal in knowledge after the image of Him that created us.

"AS THE ELECT"

Verse 12, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God..." strange thing, that never in the Bible do we find such a silly argument as that we are the elect of

God and therefore we do not need to do what He says. No such argument is ever to be found in the Bible. The argument always is, God is sovereign; God is King; God is on His throne; God has concern; therefore do what He says Colossians 3:12-14, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity..." Beloved, on top of all these things, put on love.

I Peter 4:7-8, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all things (literally before or ahead of all things) have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins."

In II Peter 1:5-7 we find a list of Christian virtues, as we sometimes call them. We are to make additions to the divine nature of which we have become partakers: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Love is the climax of the traits of Christian character that are to be added to our Christian lives.

II Peter 1:8, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The implication is that without these things you may have a knowledge and still be barren and unfruitful.

AN ILLUSTRATION

Knowledge puffs up but charity (love) builds up. Now the Apostle gives a simple illustration. You know, it isn't always the people that talk so much about knowing so much that really know the most. So the Apostle started to take some of the wind out of the sails of some of these fellows that were running wild with their Christian liberty, by saying that we know that we all have knowledge. You are not by yourselves in knowing that an idol is nothing. That is just common knowledge among God's people. Just because a little fragment of God's truth is new to you, that does not mean that it is new to everybody. We know that we all have knowledge.

Then he makes the point that knowledge puffs up but love builds up, and so he goes into this discussion of meat offered to idols, because we all understand about that. That an idol is nothing in the world. That there is none other God but one, and so on. But there are weaker brethren that may be made to stumble by the stronger and better informed brother who exercises Christian liberty. And the point that he makes then is, I Corinthians 8:10-11, "...shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ, died?"

Of course (I hasten to clear myself here), I am sure that he was not talking about a true child of God losing his salvation and going to hell. But he was talking about that weak brother stumbling against his conscience and ruining his testimony and ruining his life and usefulness as a child of God, and all this because of the unloving insistence on the part of a brother upon using his liberty. "It does not, matter. I know it does not hurt me. What do I care about anyone else?" But Paul says that when you sin against the brethren and wound their weak conscience you sin against Christ.

LOVE DESCRIBED

Perhaps the fullest description of love in any one place in the scriptures is in I Corinthians 13:1-2. And I point out just the opening words here "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge" -now notice- "all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity (love), I am nothing."

Come back to John's statement. If we have not learned to love, we have not gotten acquainted with God. "He that loveth not knoweth not God:..." And you know, even with love, it is easier to talk about it and it is easier to know about it than it is to do it. Maybe you do not have any trouble with this, but it is true for me. It is easier for me to learn from God's word that I ought to love than it is for me to love. But God's word tells me to love.

The first love of a man's heart ought to be the love of God. That is the first commandment. Mark 12:30, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment." 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."

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." Now I can go on to say, not only if we have not learned to love God, we have not gotten acquainted with Him, but also, if we cannot love our brethren we have not gotten acquainted with Him and we do not love Him. John puts it plainer than that, I John 4:20, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES"

And then here is something harder than that: If you and I cannot love the heretic, if you and I cannot love the hyper Calvinist or the ultra Armenian, if you and I cannot love the members of contradictory Christian or so called Christian

sects, if you and I cannot love the out and out sinner with no pretensions to anything but sin, if we cannot love our enemies brother, we are not well, to put it mildly, we are not very well acquainted with the Lord yet.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:43-44: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;" I confessed to you a moment ago that it is easier for me, and I know it is for you too, it is easier for me to know what God's word tells me to do than it is for me to do it. You see, knowledge is much easier to come by than love.

I suspect that in this crowd we have more knowledge than we have love. I confess I have, and I do not know much, either. That used to bother me, but then I found out that nobody else knows much either, and so it does not bother me much any more. Paul went on to say I Corinthians 8:2, "And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Well, this is what Jesus commands, whether we like it or not; whether we are doing it or not; whether we want to do it or not; this is what Jesus commands: Matthew 5:44-45, "...Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:..."

Again I hasten to clear myself, though one should not need to clear himself when quoting words of the Master. I believe He meant just what He said, whatever He said. Matthew 5:45, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:..." I think He means that you may be in outward expression of life what you profess to be inside and what you are if you are truly His child.

NATURE OF LOVE

Such is our obligation. Now, why does love not puff up as knowledge puffs up? It is not its nature to do so. You see, charity suffers long, and charity is kind and envieth not. Charity does not vaunt itself, does not go around bragging about itself. Brother, deliver me from the fellow who goes around bragging about how much he loves everybody. Let him show it. And if he loves God, then let him show it by standing for Him. If he loves God's word, let him show it by preaching and teaching. Love vaunteth not itself. It is not puffed up.

Listen, knowledge puffs up. Better be careful, and if you get puffed up with knowledge, the kindest thing anyone can do for you is to stick a pin in you. Just hope you do not have so much gooey stuff inside that the pin does not deflate you. Some people's heads, like self sealing tires or inner tubes, are practically puncture proof: there is something in there that fills up the pinpricks as fast as you can make them. Well, knowledge puffs up, but the love that God commands, the love that God's Spirit pours out in our hearts, that builds up.

OUR NEED OF LOVE

Oh, brethren, that is what we need! And when we really know Him, and not just some of the doctrine about Him, then we will have some of that love which brought His Son from heaven to earth, when He made Himself of no reputation, becoming obedient unto death, even the shameful death of the cross. Yes, because He loved!

We need something of that love that moved our Savior and He knew better than we do the eternal purposes of God and God's absolute sovereignty. And yet there was a time, Luke 19:41, "...when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it." A time when He exclaimed: Matthew 23:37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,... how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Do we know that Saviour?

He that loveth not, knoweth not God. You know, sometimes I get disturbed about a hard spirited theology. Of course, we try to teach theology, try to teach Bible theology, try to keep our doctrine straight. But we do not want to be like the Pharisees who had a zeal of God but not according to knowledge. Of course, that was a zeal; that was not a love. There is a great difference. I John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

So we try to keep our doctrine straight, but oh, brethren, we need, I need, revival of God's Spirit in our hearts pouring out a love for Him, a love for His word, a love for our brethren, a love for lost souls, a love even for our enemies. This is what Jesus commanded.

Chapter II

ARE YOU GOING TO HEAVEN?

GOD GIVES US GLIMPSES OF A BETTER WORLD, WILL YOU BE THERE?

John 14:2-3, "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. 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."

This is a small world, as it were a mere speck of dust in the great universe of God's creation, and a human lifetime is less than a moment when considered in view of an endless eternity. Spiritually ignorant of divine revelation and like simple savages overawed by the inventions of the learned, learned at any rate, in the science of destruction, not only avowed enemies of Christianity, but multitudes of infidels parading as Christians are denying the teaching of the Bible

on such fundamental subjects as the character of the true God and the nature of man, righteousness and sin, life and death, heaven and hell.

We need not be disturbed by the excursions of mice, monkeys, or men into outer space. Divine truth will survive the discoveries, inventions, and theories of astronomy and astronautics just as it has survived the discoveries, inventions, and theories of biology, geology, and other sciences; including a great deal of "science falsely so called." I Timothy 6:20-21, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: Which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with thee. Amen."

HEAVEN IS A PLACE

Spiritualists and people deceived by them, who ought to know better, think that heaven is just a different state or condition of existence. John 14:2 Jesus says, "...I go to prepare a place..."

Three heavens are mentioned in the Bible: First (that is, nearest to us), the air in which the birds fly. Genesis 1:20, "And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." Second, the space where He put the moon, the sun, and the stars. Genesis 1:14-18, "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good." Third, the heaven that is His throne. Isaiah 66:1, "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" It is this third heaven, also called paradise, II Corinthians 12:2-4, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." That is the heaven we are talking about now.

If anyone wants to argue that heaven is not a place but a state, let him argue the point with our Lord when he gets there if he gets there. Jesus said, "...I go to prepare a place for you..." He was talking to disciples who believed His word.

WHERE GOD IS

In a sense, God is everywhere Psalm 139:7-12, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee." but His presence is more manifest in heaven. So our Master taught His disciples to pray, Matthew 6:9, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."

The fact that God is especially resident in heaven appears again and again in the Bible. Psalm 14:2, "The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God." and other such references which show that the omnipresent God manifests Himself especially in and from heaven. In heaven we shall be with God in a sense far beyond anything we can experience or imagine here.

WHERE JESUS IS

Jesus said to Nicodemus 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." Being God as well as man, Jesus was also in heaven at the very time He was talking to Nicodemus. But since then He has returned to heaven in the glory of His resurrected body, and has opened the way for His followers to go there also.

In Acts 1:9 we read that "...a cloud received him out of their sight." and in Acts 7:55 the martyr Stephen, "...being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

So we need have no difficulty in knowing where Jesus has gone, where He is now, to prepare a place for us. It is in heaven above, Colossians 3:1, "...where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

WHERE ANGELS ARE

Matthew 18:10, "Take heed" said Jesus, "that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

It would be easy to multiply scripture references to holy angels, angels of God, heavenly hosts, etc., to show that heaven is the regular abode of these, Hebrews 1:14, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"

WHERE LOVED ONES ARE

The mortal bodies of our departed loved ones sleep in the dust of the earth, but it is not so with their souls. If they "...die in the Lord..." (Revelation 14:13), while their bodies rest, spiritually they have not died at all, but have gone on to heaven and are now with the Lord.

John 11:26, "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" No, believers in "soul sleeping" do not believe Jesus, but His word is still true. As one of our poets has said, "Dust thou art, to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul."

Acts 7:59, When Stephen was being stoned to death he said, "...Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Though in the body "he fell asleep," can anyone doubt that this martyr, "full of the Holy Ghost," was received by his Lord into His heavenly presence?

FRIENDS TO RECEIVE US

With the story of the unjust steward Luke 16:1-9, "And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods. And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." Jesus plainly says that these friends are to receive us not at the resurrection but "when ye fail." In other words, at the very time we "fail" from this world we are received into the next.

Even so, the Apostle Paul wrote: II Corinthians 5:6-8, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

Surely God has made it clear enough in His word that all our departed loved ones who were saved by His grace, along with all the saints of past centuries, probably from Adam and Eve and certainly from righteous Abel to the last unconscious infant laid beneath the sod, are now with Him in heaven, ready to bid us welcome when we pass through the shadow of death to that bright world above.

OUR NAMES ARE THERE

To the disciples who reported with joy that demons were subordinated to them in His name, Jesus answered:

Luke 10:20, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven."

In Revelation 20:15 we read that "...whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Thus we can understand why Jesus taught that there is more reason for joy in knowing that our names are written in heaven than in having great power, even miracle working power, on earth.

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

One of Jesus' commandments is that we shall lay up treasures in the right place so that our hearts will be in the right place:

Matthew 6:19-21, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

If we have obeyed Jesus in this matter, we have treasures stored up for ourselves in heaven, and so heaven is more precious to us.

Several crowns are mentioned in the Bible as among the treasures that can be laid up in heaven: an incorruptible crown. I Corinthians 9:25, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." a crown of rejoicing I Thessalonians 2:19, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?..." a crown of righteousness II Timothy 4:8, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." a crown of life James 1:12, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Revelation 2:10, "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be

tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." and a crown of glory I Peter 5:4, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

RESERVED FOR US

Unlike treasures on earth, which "moth and rust" can corrupt and which thieves can steal, our treasures in heaven are reserved under the same protective power of God as are we ourselves. Men may rob us of potential crowns and other treasures that we could and ought to earn but come short of. II John 8, "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." Revelation 3:11, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." but if we ever get them to our credit in heaven, they are safe.

I Peter 1:3,5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,...Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

OUR ETERNAL HOME

Note the word "mansions" in our text. (John 14:2.) The place our Lord has gone to prepare for us is a place to stay. ("Mansions" of the King James Version meant about the same thing 350 years ago.) Of course, this does not mean that we shall be confined to these abodes, or dwelling places, in our Father's "house," but we shall always have a place to call "home." And it will always be a home of such love and joy and peace as this world knows nothing of.

Even now, we ought to think of ourselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world, on our way to a better country and a better city. Hebrews 11:10-16, Abraham "...looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better

country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." In fact, our true citizenship is in heaven. Philippians 3:20, "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:"

If we die and go to heaven before the second coming of Christ, He will bring us back with Him to get our glorified, resurrected bodies before the translation of the saints still living in mortal flesh:

I Thessalonians 4:14-17, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

THE HEAVENLY CITY

As we have already seen, the "Father's house" of John 14:2 is also called a "country" and a "city" in Hebrews 11:10,16, "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city." And in Galatians 4:26 we read, "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Now we read in Revelation 21 a partial description of this glorious heavenly city, and that it will come down, not upon this present earth, but to the new earth that is to be:

Revelation 21:1-3, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

WHO CAN ENTER?

Heaven is "a prepared place for a prepared people." The Bible is very clear that only those who were chosen and made fit can enter the new Jerusalem:

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."

Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

I John 3:23, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."

Let me ask you again: "Are you going to heaven?" Let me beg you to accept one of the great invitations of God's word:

Revelation 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Chapter III

WAGES OF SIN - DEATH

DIVINE JUSTICE INSURES THAT SINNERS WILL GET EXACTLY WHAT THEY DESERVE

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Human notions about God are so corrupted by sin, so influenced by the deceptions of Satan, that men's minds naturally rebel against God's own revealed truth as to His holy character, His hatred of sin and sinners, His perfect justice that demands the punishment of sinners, if not in their own persons, then in the person of His Son as their Substitute.

WAGES ARE EARNED

Our text teaches the simple truth that sin pays wages: that is, lost sinners will get just what they earn. The context describes the saints at Rome as having been "servants of sin" before they were saved. Romans 6:16-17, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

The word "wages" necessarily suggests a relation-ship to services rendered. In the employment conditions of the world's economy, this relationship is generally imperfect: some employees are paid too much and some are not paid enough. But it is not so with the wages of sin: Romans 2:6, God "...will render to every man according to his deeds:"

Even under the old covenant, we are told, Hebrews 2:2, "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;"

If the lost sinner in his ignorance thinks that he desires justice, let him be assured that justice is exactly what he will get outside of Christ. Acts 17:31, "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."

WAGES ARE FIXED

We need to remember that the wages of sin are fixed wages, and it is God Who fixed them. You may serve sin and Satan and collect your wages from them, but just as human or corporate employers are sometimes compelled to pay wages fixed by the government, so God has fixed the wages of sin, Psalm 103:19, for "...his kingdom ruleth over all."

Unlike human governors, God has never had any need of counselors or advisers to help Him make wise and just decisions. Isaiah 40:13-14, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" No doubt sinners would like to dictate their own terms of employment but neither stockholders nor labor unions will ever be able to change the wages of sin.

Let it be understood clearly and for all time that no power, cunning, or influence of sinner or saint, or of any combination of sinners or saints, can ever pervert the justice of God. Proverbs 11:21, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered."

WHAT IS SIN?

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death;..." What is sin?

Some people think only of the worst crimes or of gross immorality as being sin. Others think only of obeying the ten commandments to avoid sin. True, I John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." but God's law includes much more than the ten commandments.

I John 5:17, "All unrighteousness is sin:..." Everything is either right or wrong. Every act, word, or thought that is not righteous is sin.

James 4:17, "...to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." So doing nothing is a sin when you ought to be doing something good.

Romans 14:23, "...whatsoever is not of faith is sin." When someone asks, "Do you see any harm in...?" or, "Do you think it is all right to . . . ?" the

scriptural answer is that, of course, at least for that person, the thing asked about is a sin. The very question indicates doubt, a lack of faith, and therefore sin.

Proverbs 24:9, "The thought of foolishness is sin:..." Man may suppose that it is a light matter to harbor foolish thoughts, but God's judgment is different.

Proverbs 21:4, "...the plowing of the wicked, is sin." Or, if we take the marginal translation, "The light of the wicked is sin."

Proverbs 21:27; 28:9, "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?... He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

So according to God's own word, even outwardly good works, even religious acts, are sinful and abominable in His sight if the doer's heart and motives are not right. Truly, Galatians 3:22, "...the scripture hath concluded all under sin,..."

SPIRITUAL DEATH

"The wages of sin is death." First of all, spiritual death. Adam and Eve were the only humans to die this death; their descendants have all been born dead except the "Prince of Life" (Acts 3:15.)

Spiritual death means separation from God. On the day that Adam sinned, he died spiritually. Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." and Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:" This is not something that happens to us now: it was our condition by nature, and remains the condition of all who do not receive new life in Christ. Ephesians 2:1-5, "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;)"

NATURAL DEATH

After Adam sinned and died spiritually, God drove him out of the garden of Eden, away from the tree of life. Adam began to die a natural death, which he accomplished in 930 years, and men have been dying ever since, most of

them in much less time. This death, too (separation of soul from body), is part of "the wages of sin."

Natural or physical death is the first death, that is, the first experience of dying, for most of the human race. The only exceptions so far (since Adam and Eve, who first died spiritually) have been Enoch and Elijah. Other exceptions will be the saints still living on earth when our Lord returns. I Corinthians 15:51-52, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." I Thessalonians 4:14-17, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

SECOND DEATH

But "the wages of sin" go infinitely beyond spiritual death, or separation from God in this life, and infinitely beyond natural death, or separation of soul from body. Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

Common sense and reason would teach us the moral necessity of future punishment of the wicked even if it were not plainly declared in God's word. Surely it is obvious enough that justice is not done in this world. Genesis 18:25, "...Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Through the beloved apostle John, our Lord has given us a prophetic vision of the final payment of "the wages of sin":

Revelation 20:12-15, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

"SOUL AND BODY"

The expression "death and hell" (hades) in Revelation 20:14 means simply "bodies and souls." By a figure of speech, "death" represents the dead but

resurrected bodies of the damned, and "hades" represents the souls confined there in torment until the last judgment.

Compare the words of Jesus: Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (gehenna) "Gehenna" here is the same as the lake of fire the second death.

THE GIFT OF GOD

Such are the fearful wages of sin, irrevocably fixed by the just and holy God. Ezekiel 33:11, Yet God has "...no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live..." Romans 6:23, And so, "...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This gift you do not and cannot earn. You can get it only from God, only through Jesus Christ, and only by receiving Him as Lord. This gift is eternal life and peace with God, instead of eternal death and torment with Satan.

Acts 16:31, "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."

Chapter IV

REPENT AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

NOT ONLY THE COMMANDS OF GOD BUT THE ORDER OF THESE COMMANDS MUST BE OBSERVED

Mark 1:14-15, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

Of all the satanic perversions of the gospel message, one of the most pernicious is the reversal of the scriptural order of repentance and faith. Necessarily connected with this reversal is a complete lack of understanding of the meaning of repentance and of the nature of saving faith. It is no accident that the only time in the New Testament that the command to repent and the command to believe are brought together, they are quoted from the Lord Jesus Himself, and the command to repent comes first.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Moreover, it needs to be noticed that only twice in the New Testament do the nouns repentance and faith appear together, and both times in this order. Those false teachers of counterfeit "faith and repentance" cannot justify their reversed order from the scriptures, and their arguments defending their anti-

scriptural order are based on gross misinterpretation of the meaning of both repentance and faith. The two places in the New Testament where the nouns repentance and faith are used together are: Acts 20:20-21, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." and Hebrews 6:1, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,"

"THAT YE MIGHT BELIEVE"

There is one other place in the New Testament where, in the King James Version, the words repent and believe come together, and although in the original the word for "repent" is different from that used in the other passages cited, the same order prevails. Jesus speaking to the chief priests and the elders;

Matthew 21:32, "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

"INSEPARABLE GRACES"

In this last citation (Matthew 21:32) the word for "repented" might better be translated "regretted."

As to the words usually represented by "repent" and "repentance" in the King James Version, the truth is as stated in the New Hampshire confession of faith, that repentance and faith are "inseparable graces." This is true not because it is so stated in the confession, but it was so stated and agreed upon by sound Baptists because it is truth revealed in the New Testament.

The truth is that divinely inspired speakers and writers of the New Testament generally considered it sufficient to refer to either repentance or faith alone, knowing that either word necessarily implies the other. It was only for special emphasis, and perhaps to make clear their true relationship, that these few times both terms are used.

A SAD MISTAKE

I have heard Baptist preachers who ought to know better say of the Philippian jailor in Acts 16 that Paul and Silas told him only to believe because "he had already repented." The man who can make such a statement either does not know the meaning of repentance or has not carefully considered his words.

As a matter of fact, there is no such thing as a sinner who has truly repented "from dead works" and "toward God" without also coming to saving faith in Christ. And there is no such thing as a saved believer in Christ who has not repented in the New Testament sense of repentance.

Repentance and faith are not "steps" to salvation; much less are the reversed and counterfeit "faith and repentance" of false religion "steps" to anything but delusion and destruction.

New Testament repentance and faith are "inseparable graces"; two out of many aspects of a single experience of God's saving grace.

MEANING OF TERMS

True repentance is a change of mind, and when used in a gospel connection this means, for the lost sinner, a change from unbelief to belief. Obviously, then, when a sinner has fully repented, he has also come to believe what before he had not believed, involving a trust in One Whom before he had not trusted.

Saving faith necessarily involves personal trust or commitment, as clearly taught in the Bible. Since the lost sinner is in a natural state of unbelief, obviously he cannot believe without a change of mind, which is the New Testament meaning of repentance.

BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

Paul in I Corinthians 15:3-5 sums up the gospel: "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..."

If you have not yet believed this message to the extent of trusting Christ for salvation, may you, by the grace of God, repent (change your mind) and believe the gospel to the saving of your soul. 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."

Chapter V

HAVE YOU COUNTED THE COST?

TOWERS WE MAY TRY TO BUILD COST TOO MUCH; JESUS PAID IT ALL!

Luke 14:28-30, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish."

Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Are you building a tower of refuge and defense for your soul, hoping that this tower of your own building will keep you safe against all your enemies? Do you hope that this tower you are trying to build will protect you even from the righteous judgments of God? Have you counted the cost?

Jesus' purpose in using this illustration of building a military tower or fortress was not merely, as many people suppose, to incite us to earnestness and sincerity of purpose, but to bring us to realize that none of us can pay the price, none of us can bear the cost, of finishing a tower that can save us from divine judgment. When we realize this fact, we are ready to flee for refuge to the strong tower that God has already provided for us.

Let us look at some of the towers which men try to build but can never finish to the extent that they can save a soul:

TOWERS OF WEALTH

The Bible plainly tells us that we were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold. I Peter 1:18, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;" yet many men vainly hope that worldly riches can buy not only anything in this world, but even a place in the world to come. They will learn better, if not before, after it is too late:

Isaiah 2:20-21, "In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; To go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth."

TOWERS OF FAME

Some people think that if they can acquire sufficient fame or renown in this world it may go with them into a future life. But even in this life, fame is fleeting and fickle:

Psalm 74:5-6, "A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers."

TOWERS OF STATION

Worldly station or position will gain us no advantage before God. Psalm 39:5, "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah."

The Bible makes it clear that God's judgments will come upon the high and mighty as well as on the lowly and weak. Revelation 6:15, "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;"

TOWERS OF LEARNING

Our modern world especially is characterized by a near worship of human learning, but, though a man could acquire all the knowledge and wisdom of this world, he still could not stand against the omniscience and the eternal wisdom of God.

Proverbs 21:30, "There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD."

TOWERS OF SENTIMENT

Many people have false sentimental ideas about God, and trust in these sentiments, contrary to the plain teaching of God's word. So, they suppose that God is too "good," "loving," "merciful," to "send them to hell." Modernistic misinterpret of scripture vainly imagine a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New. But it was the kind and loving but also true and faithful Savior Who exclaimed:

Matthew 23:33, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

It is in the New Testament that we read, Hebrew 12:29, "For our God is a consuming fire." And Revelation 6:16, "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:"

TOWERS OF TRADITION

Following and building upon the traditions of men will never build a tower that can stand against God. So Jesus said:

Mark 7:6,7,9, "...This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men... And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition."

TOWERS OF PRETENSE

Merely pretending to worship and serve God is another tower of delusion that is never finished and could not stand if it were. Jesus speaks of those: Matthew 23:14, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

We are reminded in Hebrews 4:13, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

TOWERS OF UNION

The religious fashion of the day is so called union. Religionists, unsure of their positions, seek to strengthen themselves by uniting with others who, likewise, are not sure of anything much. But the only religious union that God will bless is union with and in Christ.

As to the union of secular powers and false religions of this world, we may note Proverbs 11:21: "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished:..."

TOWERS OF TEARS

Some people seem to think that they can shed enough tears to wash their sins away. We may well shed tears over our sins, but that tears do not insure acceptance with God is evident from Malachi 2:13: "And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth it with good will at your hand."

TOWERS OF PRAYERS

Again, it is vainly supposed that our prayers, if long enough, frequent enough, or earnest enough, can bring us salvation. That a form of prayer cannot avail is evident from many scriptures. To certain ones, God said, Isaiah 1:15, "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." And in Proverbs 28:9 we read, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination."

TOWERS OF CEREMONY

Outward rites and ceremonies of religion can never afford us a place of safety. Of the sacred Jewish rite of circumcision, Paul wrote Romans 2:28-29, "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

So, in our day, even the sacred ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper have no saving virtue in themselves, much less have religious rites or ceremonies of human invention or tradition.

TOWERS OF DOCTRINE

It is good for us to believe sound doctrine, the teaching of God's word. But a mere intellectual and formal adherence to sound doctrine is not salvation.

Of the Pharisees, Jesus said: Matthew 23:3, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." To us He says: 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."

TOWERS OF FAITH

Romans 5:2, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Faith, however, is the means, instrument, or channel that connects us with the Savior. Faith has no saving virtue in itself.

Sad to say, some people have faith in faith instead of faith in God. A misdirected faith can be a most terrible agent of destruction. Thus, we read of some II Thessa-lonians 2:11-12, "...God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

A STRONG TOWER

So, with all the religious towers of men's building we can only say in the light of God's word that man is not able to finish the towers that he begins and they would be no help to him in eternity even if he could finish them.

But, thank God, there is a strong tower already provided:

Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

Will you not today say with the Psalmist of old, Psalm 142:4, "...refuge failed me..." and then, Psalm 143:9, "Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me."

Chapter VI

THROUGH FAITH WE ESTABLISH THE LAW!

SCRIPTURES SHOW THAT JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH IS IN HARMONY WITH GOD'S LAW

Romans 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."

Objections to salvation through faith in Christ alone are not new. Nineteen centuries ago the apostle Paul answered the false teachers who teach, under the pretense of upholding the law of God, that men are saved in whole or in part by their "good works."

These false teachers say today: "If you tell people that they are saved by grace through faith alone, without good works, then they will live ungodly lives and still expect to go to heaven." In other words, these false teachers accuse us Baptists, from the days of John the Baptist until now, of making void the holy law of God when we preach justification by faith alone.

Paul by inspiration gives us God's word that the false teachers are wrong. Through faith we establish the law. Note four ways in which this is so:

1. Through faith we establish the law in its PROPER PURPOSE. The law was not meant to save and never did save a single soul. Galatians 3:21, "Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." The Bible says plainly: Galatians 3:11, "...that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith."

Who is it then that tries to nullify and destroy the law? It is the false religionist who tells people to obey the law in order to be saved. He is holding forth a false promise that the law will do something it cannot do, and was not intended to do.

A DIRTY TRICK

If you recommend me to your friends as a man able to do something I cannot do; to prescribe medical treatment, for example, or to give sound legal advice; your recommendation is not a loving service, but a malicious and destructive trick, since I am neither a physician nor a lawyer. If you are really my friend, you will recommend me only so far as my capabilities warrant, and thus neither you nor I nor our mutual friends will be disappointed.

Even so, we that truly love and honor God's holy law establish it in its proper purpose, which is to condemn the world and to bring lost sinners to Christ for salvation. Romans 3:19, "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." Galatians 3:24, "Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

LAW AND JUSTICE

2. Through faith we establish the law as having an ETERNAL PENALTY fully enforced or executed. For the redeemed the penalty was paid by Christ upon the cross; the lost will bear their just punishment forever. False religionists must lower God's standard of righteousness to indulge a false hope that man's imperfect obedience may satisfy the holy and perfectly just God.

God spared not His own Son, but when our sins were laid upon Him Romans 1:18, "...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And if the divine hand of justice could not be stayed when the Beloved Son was suffering the punishment due His elect, be assured that there can be no escape in eternity for lost sinners. Revelation 14:11, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night..."

PERFECT OBEDIENCE

3. Through faith we establish the law as perfectly FULFILLED IN CHRIST. Matthew 5:17, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." God's holy law demands not partial obedience, but perfect obedience and separation from sin, and this perfect righteousness is provided for us in Christ. Hebrews 7:26, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."

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

4. Through faith we establish the law as having its righteousness fulfilled in the life of TRUE BELIEVERS in Christ. Not they who boast of themselves and their "good" works, but they whose boast is in and of their Lord are the true representatives of the righteousness of the law.

SAVED TO SERVE

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."

Romans 8:3-4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Confident, therefore, that in so doing I do establish the law, I again quote the inspired apostle Paul as a personal invitation to every sinner who wants to be saved: Acts 16:31, "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."

Chapter VII

EVIDENCES OF THE NEW BIRTH

YOU CAN AND OUGHT TO KNOW

WHETHER YOU HAVE BEEN BORN AGAIN HERE ARE 10 SIGNS

John 3:7-8, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

We know when the wind blows because we can hear the sound of it and we can see the effects of it when dust and smoke and chaff are blown away and grass and trees move and bend with the wind. We have learned that these things are the effects of the wind, and we accept them as evidences that the wind is blowing. Even so, the Bible tells us that certain things are effects and evidences of the new birth, and if we recognize these evidences in our lives we may be sure we have been born again.

The person who is born again:

HEARS GOD'S WORDS

1. John 8:47, "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." The persons to whom Jesus spoke these words were mentally acquainted with the scriptures and they did hear God's word through Jesus with their outer ears, but they refused to hear them with the inner man. They turned a deaf ear and hardened their hearts against the truth. The child of God not only hears God's words with the outer ear and receives them into his natural mind, but he hears in a real spiritual sense: that is, he

consents and agrees to God's words in his heart, so that he is willing to be governed by the truth conveyed in these words of God. He recognizes the authority of God to speak and his own duty to listen to what God says. He believes that God has spoken through the Apostles and other inspired writers of the Bible, and he listens to their messages as unto God. I John 4:6, "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

BELIEVES IN GOD'S SON

2. 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." The Bible does not say that we are born again because we believed, but that we believe because we have been born again. John did not write, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ will be born of God," but, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is (or, better translated, has been) born of God"; that is, his faith is evidence of his regeneration. Many lost sinners say that they believe in Christ, but they don't. They have no true inner conviction or faith that Christ died for their sins, that He is the Son of God, that He arose from the dead, I Corinthians 15:25, "...he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." or that God has ordained Him to "judge the world in righteousness." Lost sinners may believe in some false or imperfect imaginary Christ of man's teaching, but they do not believe in the Christ of the Bible. They do not believe that Jesus is the Christ described in the Bible. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

LOVES JESUS CHRIST

3. 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 lost sinner does not love the Lord. The person who is born again loves Jesus, and will do anything he can for Him. 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." I John 5:3, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous."

LOVES THE BRETHREN

4. I John 4:7; 5:1; John 13:35, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God... 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... By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

MAKES PEACE FOR SINNERS

5. Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Lost sinners are enemies of God. Isaiah 57:21, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Even the saints in this life war against God in their fleshly natures. 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." The children of God delight in making peace between God and sinful men by bringing them to Christ. II Corinthians 5:20, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

KEEPS HIMSELF

6. I John 5:18, "...he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." The person who is born again has within him a desire to persevere in the faith, and God gives him the power to keep himself I Peter 1:5, as he is "...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

DOES RIGHTEOUSNESS

7. I John 2:29, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Romans 8:3-4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

CANNOT SIN

8. I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." John 3:6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Romans 7:20, "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."

IS CHASTISED

9. Hebrews 12:5-8, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 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."

OVERCOMES THE WORLD

10. 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." The person who is overcome by the world and goes back into sin may have some kind of religion, but he doesn't have Christ; he hasn't been born again. The children of God overcome the world instead of being overcome by it.

Have you been born again? Examine yourself in the light of God's Word. John 3:3, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Chapter VIII

HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM

ONLY BORN AGAIN BELIEVERS ARE JOINT HEIRS WITH CHRIST INHERITANCE AFTER RESURRECTION

I Corinthians 6:9-11, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

Listing ten varieties of sinners, the inspired apostle declares in the above text that none of them shall inherit the kingdom of God. But verse 11 recognizes the change of character and standing of those who have been born again. Some of these saints in the church at Corinth were formerly sinners such as those described in verses 9 and 10, and of course all were formerly lost sinners. But now they are no longer such as they used to be.

STILL "FLESH AND BLOOD"

This does not mean that these Corinthians had attained heavenly perfection or were no longer capable of sin. Paul's letter to them points out many things still wrong with their practice. His warning here was not intended to frighten and threaten with hellfire the Christian who might temporarily fall into

sin, but to characterize hypocrites and open sinners as persons who "shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

I Corinthians 15:50, Even the heirs to this kingdom will not receive their inheritance until after their resurrection in immortal, incorruptible bodies. "...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;..." but in our glorified bodies of flesh and bones, like the resurrection body of our risen Lord, 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." Matthew 25:34, the saints will "...inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

"IF A SON, THEN HEIR"

Only those who become heirs in this life will receive an inheritance in the life to come. This inheritance is our birthright as God's spiritual children. 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."

Some persons have mistakenly supposed that the words, "if so be that we suffer with him," are meant to qualify or limit the previous words, thus denying to some of God's children the promised inheritance. Actually, this verse is a simple example of synonymous parallelism characteristic of Hebrew but found also in the Greek: the latter part of the verse in effect saying about the same thing as the former, but in different words. For help in understanding this verse, compare Galatians 4:7, "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." and Galatians 5:24, "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

Thus the Bible makes it plain that all true children of God are heirs of His kingdom. Our shares in this inheritance will vary according to our faithfulness in His service. Titus 3:7, "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." II Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Revelation 22:12, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." but every true child of God will inherit some share, large or small. 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." Let no man beguile you of this reward. Colossians 2:18, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,"

Our text states three facts about true heirs of the kingdom: "Ye washed yourselves," "Ye were sanctified," "Ye were justified." And all this I Corinthians

6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

"YE WASHED YOURSELVES"

"Ye washed yourselves off" is a literal translation of the Greek verb here (middle voice, not passive). This form of the verb directs our attention to the fact of individual human responsibility even in the divine miracle of the new birth. It is true that the sons of God "were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is also true that, in distinction from lost sinners, 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."

I am not trying to explain the new birth. I am simply setting forth what the scriptures say.

Of course, true Bible believers will recognize that the washing referred to in our text is the "washing of regeneration." 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;" It has no connection with baptism except that baptism is an outward picture or symbol of the spiritual cleansing that actually takes place in the new birth.

That baptism is not a literal cleansing is plainly declared in I Peter 3:21: "The like figure where-unto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" That is, baptism "saves" by picturing the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So that the elect will not be deceived by false doctrine, Peter plainly declares that baptism is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh."

"YE WERE SANCTIFIED"

True heirs of the kingdom not only have washed themselves in regeneration, but also have been given a standing of perfect holiness before God. In His will Hebrews 10:10, "...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."

The sanctification referred to in our text is not the progressive sanctification which is a later part of Christian experience, but the work of the Holy Spirit in setting us apart to God at the very beginning of our experience II

Thessalonians 2:13, "...salvation through (in) sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:" In this scriptural sense, all true believers are saints.

"YE WERE JUSTIFIED"

A wonderful fact about our salvation is the Bible truth Romans 4:5, in that God "...justifieth the ungodly,..." (impious) because "...his faith is counted for righteousness." Ours is the blessedness described by David Romans 4:6, of the man "...unto whom God imputeth (gives credit for) righteousness without works."

Just as we "washed ourselves" in the new birth when we believed in Christ for salvation, just as "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" are part of the same experience, so also we were justified when we believed.

John 3:18, "He that believeth on him (Christ) 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."

ARE YOU AN HEIR?

Are you one of the heirs of God's kingdom, an heir of God and a joint heir of Jesus Christ? Have you believed in Him to the saving of your soul?

I Corinthians 6:9-10, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of them-selves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Though perhaps you were once such a sinner, can you say now that by God's grace in the new birth you washed yourself through faith in the cleansing blood of the Lamb, yea, you were sanctified, yea, you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the Spirit of our God?

If, and only if, you are a child of the King, then you are an heir of the kingdom.

Chapter IX

JUSTIFIED FROM ALL THINGS

GUILTY SINNERS ARE DECLARED
NOT GUILTY BY OUR
RIGHTEOUS GOD AND SAVIOR

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."

Job 9:2, "...how should man be just with God?" is a question asked by Job over 3,000 years ago. Man is a sinner, and, as such, an object of anger and hatred in the eyes of his holy Creator, Habakkuk 1:13; Psalm 5:5; 7:11, Who is "...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?... The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity... God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day." The problem of whether and how sinful man can become acceptable to the thrice holy God is a problem to which many people have never yet found the answer, but God has clearly answered it in the New Testament.

NOT ONLY CAN GOD MAKE GUILTY SINNERS NOT GUILTY IN HIS SIGHT, BUT HE IS RIGHTEOUS in so doing. He has set forth His Son Jesus Christ Romans 3:26, "To declare . . . his righteousness: that he might be JUST, AND THE JUSTIFIER of him which believeth in Jesus."

WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION?

To "justify" as the word is used in the Bible, is to declare right or just. "Justification" does not refer to a change of character, but to a judicial pronouncement of innocence, a verdict of "righteous" or "not guilty."

It is true that sinners justified before God will eventually become wholly righteous in character, but this fact is revealed elsewhere and not in the word "justify" or "justification."

Thus in Matthew 11:19, "...But wisdom is justified of her children." does not mean that wisdom was made right but that she was declared right "of," from or by, her children.

In Matthew 12:37, "For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." cannot mean that our mere words make us right or wrong, but that our words will declare or reveal whether we are right or wrong. This verse makes it clear that "justified" is simply the opposite of "condemned."

For conclusive proof of the scriptural meaning of "justify," Luke 7:9, "When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Of course, no one can change the character of God, and He has always been righteous. These people simply pronounced their judgment or declared that God was righteous.

WHO IS JUSTIFIED?

According to our text, "all that believe" are justified in Christ. More literally, it is "everyone believing," making this a very personal matter.

The believing one who is justified is not the "good" man that tries to join good works to his faith as a means of salvation, Romans 4:5, "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

WHY JUSTIFIED?

Why can God righteously justify the ungodly: why can He declare the impious man righteous, counting his faith for righteousness? Romans 3:23-24, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:"

So it is through redemption in Christ that God can justly be gracious: the full ransom price was paid on Calvary, Romans 5:9, and believers are "...now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

No mere man could have paid this ransom: it could be paid only by God Himself, Who became the "Son of Man" for this purpose, Romans 1:4, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:"

So vital is the historical resurrection of the human body of Jesus as a testimony to His essential deity that the Bible tells us: I Corinthians 15:17, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." But, thanks be to God, Romans 4:25, He "...was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

HOW JUSTIFIED?

With this clear teaching of the New Testament, we have the answer to Job's question, Job 9:1, "how should man be just with God?" Romans 3:28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Galatians 3:24, "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

WHEN JUSTIFIED?

Outlining something of God's eternal purpose, Paul wrote: Romans 8:30, "Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

This grand declaration of the purpose of Him Who Romans 4:17, "...calleth those things which be not as though they were." is sometimes misused in attempts to support the unscriptural doctrine of "eternal justification." The verse does not teach eternal justification any more than it teaches eternal glorification. What it does teach is that God, Who sees the end from the beginning, will finish what He began, and this is as sure as if it were done, but everything in due order.

If we are willing to believe God's word, it is plain enough: a man is justified when he believes, and not before: 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."

As to the Bible denying heresy that the elect are justified without hearing and believing the gospel, God says: Revelation 21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, 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."

HOW LONG JUSTIFIED?

The believer is justified or for legal purposes, declared not guilty, of all sins past, present, and future. He will not come into condemnation. 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." God chastens whom He loves, and deals with us as sons. Hebrews 12:7, "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" not as lawbreakers. So far as legal judgment is concerned, God will never again consider us guilty of sin, but looks upon us as clothed in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ:

Romans 4:6-7, "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."

JUSTIFIED FOR WHAT?

Contrary to Satan's propaganda, justification by faith alone does not lead or encourage believers to sin but does promote the fulfillment of the righteousness of the very law from whose penalties we are set free in Christ. Romans 8:1-4, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

True believers, who have trusted in the merits of Christ for their justification and have received Him as their Savior, have also been born of God. John 1:12-13, "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."

Such believers can say with Paul: 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 them-selves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

Chapter X

THIS IS EVERLASTING LIFE

ETERNAL LIFE - THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD MUST BE RECEIVED HERE TO BE ENJOYED HEREAFTER

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

If the Bible gives us a definition of everlasting life, it is in these words of Jesus which might be better translated, "This is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou didst send." In other words, to know God the Father and God the Son is to have eternal life.

"IS" NOT "MEANS"

A false translation of the scriptures is that which substitutes the word "means" for "is" in this verse. False witnesses of Jehovah then so interpret the word "means" as to deny eternal life as a present gift to all true believers in Christ and reserve it for a select group of their own description in a world to come.

KINDS OF "LIFE" AND "DEATH"

Some common words like "life" and "death" are most difficult to define because they are used in many different senses by different people in different connections. But in the Bible "life" does not mean mere existence and "death" does not mean nonexistence in an absolute sense. A difference between vegetable life and animal life seems clear enough, and, although infidels may not, Christians do, in accord with the Bible, make a distinction between human

life and the life of lower animals. Since man was made "a little lower than the angels," we may also distinguish between human and angelic life.

Of course, the highest life, and the source of all other life, is God Himself. I Timothy 6:16, "Who only hath immortality,..." That is, the living God has life in and of and by Himself, while His creatures can possess everlasting life only as a gift from Him.

WHOM TO FEAR

Human life includes more than a living body. Jesus said: Matthew 10:28, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (gehenna the lake of fire). This destruction, not annihilation, but "everlasting destruction." II Thessalonians 1:9, "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;" This is called "the second death" in Revelation 20:14, "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death." This is the conscious death of torment where, Jesus said, Mark 9:43-48, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Ephesians 2:1-2, We who now live in Christ were formerly "...dead in trespasses and sins;" and while we were so dead (that is, dead to God) we "...walked according to the course of this world,..."

To the living saints at Colosse Paul wrote, Colossians 3:3, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

SOURCE OF LIFE

As already stated, all life comes from the living God. Jesus tells us: John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Jesus came that His "sheep" (His people) John 10:10, "...might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Romans 6:23, God's gift of "...eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." brings it to pass that the Christian, Colossians 3:10, "...is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:" II Peter 1:4, More than this, true believers become "...partakers of the divine nature,..." As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, I Corinthians 2:16, "...But we have the mind of Christ."

BEGINNING OF LIFE

Of course, so far as eternal life is in God, it had no beginning, just as God had no beginning but is Himself the beginning of all things. As a quality of God, eternal life is eternal as God is eternal.

But in our human experience of divine salvation, eternal life begins when a true knowledge of God begins. And we can know Him only in and through Christ. As Jesus said, John 6:45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."

We come to know by believing the truth, and this believing and the new birth are inseparably connected: 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 PRESENT POSSESSION

Eternal life is not just something promised for another world, but is a present possession of every true believer:

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."

The words, "eternal" and "everlasting" are used interchangeably to translate the same Greek word. It would seem obvious enough that eternal or everlasting life must last forever, but Jesus adds to our assurance by declaring that the born again believer shall not come into the judgment that is appointed for the lost.

Again we read that He gives to His "sheep" (His redeemed people) 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." Limitations of space forbid quoting a multitude of similar assurances of scripture that God's true children here and now have everlasting life.

CONFLICT OF LIFE AND DEATH

Yet even with this life, Christians have with them in this world the old man of flesh which we are commanded to reckon to be dead. Romans 6:11, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." and whose deeds we are to keep on killing by the Spirit. Romans 8:13, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

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

This conflict is graphically stated in 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."

A GROWING LIFE

I Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" Again, the same apostle urges us to II Peter 3:18, "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..."

If we know a little of God, if we have within us a beginning of eternal life, we are to press on to a greater knowledge, a fuller life. Philippians 3:8-14, "Yea doubt-less, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

A GLORIOUS VICTORY

Thinking of eternal life as the knowledge of God, capable of growth and perfection, will help us to understand such scriptures as Mark 10:30, "...in the world to come eternal life." This means, of course, a perfected knowledge or life a larger measure of that same eternal life which even in its infancy in this world led the faithful disciple to leave all else for his Master.

In this world our eternal life is cramped and hindered by spiritually "dead" bodies, but after the resurrection we shall have spiritual bodies of glorified flesh and bones. I Corinthians 15:44, "...There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual 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." Our whole being will be permeated with eternal life: we shall know even as we are known. I Corinthians 13:12, "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

No wonder that, still bound to these bodies of sin: Romans 8:23, we who "...have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body."

I Corinthians 15:54, "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Chapter XI

WALKING WITH GOD

THE WAY TO PLEASE GOD IS TO WALK BY FAITH TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM

Genesis 5:22-24, "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

Hebrews 11:5, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

The word "walk" in scripture often refers to the life, conduct, or behavior. So when we read that Enoch walked with God, the meaning is not merely that he took a few literal steps in the company of God, but that his life was a life of fellowship with God. The statement in Hebrews makes it clear that this walking with God, this conduct of life in fellowship with God, pleased God. The apostle John was writing about this kind of life. I John 1:6-7, "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."

AGAINST THE WORLD

Enoch walked with God and so enjoyed fellowship with God while the world in general was departing from God. The world was walking in sin, becoming more and more sinful until the people of this world brought upon themselves the judgment of God in the flood of Noah's day. But while the people of the world walked in sin, Enoch walked with God.

It is still true that if we would walk with God, if we would have fellowship with Him, if we would be His friends, we must be separate from the world, we must count the world an enemy. James 4:4, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Too many Christians would like to walk in fellowship with the people and in the customs of this world and still claim the fellowship and blessings of God. Too many of us have forgotten the teaching of Jesus that His true and faithful disciples are not of this world. Too many would like to escape the persecution which the Bible declares is the necessary experience II Timothy 3:12, "...all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

Enoch walked with God because he was not afraid to walk apart from and contrary to the world.

A HABITUAL WALK

Genesis 5:22, "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Many Christians try to walk with God a little while and perhaps even at repeated intervals in times of revival, but turn aside to walk with the world at other times. Surely such an inconsistent walk is not pleasing to God.

If we really know what it means to walk with God, to enjoy His company, and have found this to be a better way than the ways of the world, surely the wise course is always to walk in this better and happier way. Yet, how often do even the true people of God turn aside from fellowship with Him and return again, at least temporarily, to their old sinful ways!

Enoch walked with God not only for a day, or a year, or during a small part of his life, but made it his habitual practice; day by day, for over three hundred years, he walked with God. It was this consistent walk that obtained for him the testimony that he pleased God.

READY FOR HEAVEN

Enoch's fellowship with God was such, that at the end of his walk on earth he was ready for heaven without the necessity of natural death and resurrection. Hebrews 11:5, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

Certainly, even with the closest walk of fellowship with God in this world, we shall experience a great change when we move to realms above. But God's people are admonished in His word to live in this world as citizens of heaven. We shall have a better home in eternity or a better place in that home in proportion as we shall have spent our time here preparing for it.

This does not mean that getting to heaven depends on our life here, but our position, our rewards there, on the authority of our Master, will be according to our works. Therefore we are advised, Colossians 3:2, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

I Corinthians 15:50, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." Hence

the necessity of the resurrection of the saints who die, or the translation of those who are still living when our Lord returns, I Corinthians 15:51-54, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory."

Undoubtedly, before we can enter into the presence of our Lord in glory, we must leave behind all that pertains to this present evil world. If we have lived worldly lives after trusting Christ for salvation, we shall indeed get to heaven if we are truly His children, I Corinthians 3:15, but "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Faithful children of God will prefer, as did Enoch, to be strangers and pilgrims in this world so that in due time they may be at home with the Lord, rather than to be at home in this world and strangers to heaven.

WALKING BY FAITH

Even as II Corinthians 5:7, "(...we walk by faith, not by sight :)", so it was by faith that Enoch walked with God and obtained the testimony that he pleased God. Whatever may have been the means by which Enoch came to know God, without doubt he heard often from Adam himself the account of the creation and fall of man, and God's promise of a Savior. It is possible that God revealed Himself to Enoch in other ways, but we can be sure, since Adam did not die till Enoch was 308 years old, that the warnings and promises of God's word had been often heard and certainly believed by this man who walked with God.

That Enoch walked with God by faith is not mere supposition, for we are plainly told in Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

GOD AS JUDGE

At the first mention of Enoch we read that he Genesis 5:22, "...walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years..." The very name Methuselah was an expression of Enoch's faith in God as the Judge who would send a flood of waters to destroy the world at the time of the death of Methuselah.

Thus the faith of Enoch included the recognition of God as Judge, and this is necessarily true of saving faith. Much of modern so called Christianity fails to recognize God as Judge, and even denies His right to judge His own creatures

according to His own will. But such religion is not only vain; it amounts to open rebellion against the authority of God.

Enoch believed the warnings as well as the promises of God's word, as does every true child of God. Sinners who do not believe in His judgment certainly will not walk with God. Psalm 111:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth forever." It is worthy of note that Methuselah, the man whose lifetime measured the forbearance of God, His delay in visiting a wicked world with its deserved destruction, this man Methuselah lived longer than any other man. Surely this goodness of God, His mingling of justice with mercy, ought to lead men to repentance.

Enoch believed in God as Judge, and walked with God 300 years.

GOD AS SAVIOR

God's only way of bestowing mercy is in and through His Son. This has always been true, and this redemptive work of Christ was first announced in the garden of Eden.

Enoch learned what every child of Adam needs to know: that there is no escape from God's judgment except in His grace and this grace is in Christ. God has only one way of salvation and never had any other. All the true saints of Old Testament days were saved by believing the promises of God concerning the Messiah Who was to come, just as all the saints of this age are saved by believing the testimony of God's word concerning this same Messiah Who came over 19 centuries ago.

Any religion that rejects the plain teaching of God's word about His Son, any religion that holds forth any hope of salvation other than Jesus Christ alone, is contrary to the will and word of God, and will lead its worshippers to hell. Enoch walked with God because he believed in Him as Savior.

GOD AS REWARDER

Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The man who comes to God must not only believe that he is (namely that He is the God of the Bible) but also that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

Because of the false teachings of false denominations of so called Christianity, most Christians today are completely confused on the subjects of salvation and rewards. The Bible teaches that salvation is by grace through faith, but rewards are according to our works.

Sad to say, the only concern of millions of people who think they are Christians is to escape hell and get to heaven. Such an attitude is certainly not pleasing to God.

The true child of God with a real experience of God's grace is constrained by the love of Christ to serve Him. Whatever your religion or denomination, if you have not in your heart that love of God which makes you want to obey and glorify Him, you have no right to call yourself His child. 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."

Moreover, we have it as a true command from our Lord Matthew 6:20, that we are to "...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:" It is not pleasing to our Lord that we should come into His presence in the world to come as spiritual paupers. We can have eternal rewards, incorruptible treasures, in heaven, if we will faithfully serve Him on earth.

Enoch walked with God because He believed in God as the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

NEWNESS OF LIFE

If you are a child of God and know what it means to walk with Him, you may learn from Enoch to maintain that walk, that habitual fellowship with God, to the end of life's pilgrimage. If you are not a child of God, believe in Him now as your Judge and as your Savior, and then having become a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus, rise to walk in newness of life and trust Him as your Rewarder according as you diligently seek Him.

Chapter XII

SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

GOD GIVES TO HIS OWN PEOPLE HIS OWN BLESSINGS IN HIS OWN WAY

Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:"

"Heavenly places" here could as well be translated "heavenly things" and "all spiritual blessings" could better be rendered "every spiritual blessing." So we are told in this text that God blessed His people in every spiritual blessing in heavenly things in Christ. Not only the sum total of all our spiritual blessings but every single blessing comes to us from God in Christ. James 1:17 we are told, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the

Father of lights,...” But our text in Ephesians refers especially to spiritual blessings, some of which are mentioned in the context.

SOURCE OF BLESSING

We can have no spiritual blessing except as God is pleased to bless us. John the Baptist recognized this fact, John 3:27, "...A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." II Corinthians 11:31, It is "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,..." Who blessed us in every spiritual blessing that we now enjoy even if we have forgotten the giver in our enjoyment of the gift.

FOUNT OF BLESSING

Our text declares that God blessed us "in Christ." The spiritual promises and the spiritual blessings of God are all in Christ. Salvation and all the things that accompany salvation are in Him. 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." Jesus said plainly, without exception, John 14:6, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In these days of modernistic infidelity and compromise of Bible truth with the religions of the world, we need to reemphasize and make it so clear that everyone can understand that God's spiritual blessings can be obtained only in Christ.

CAUSE OF BLESSING

Why has God blessed His people with spiritual blessings in heavenly things? Our context in Ephesians I is in perfect harmony with the teaching of the whole Bible. It is not because of any goodness or merit seen or foreseen in us that God bestows His spiritual blessings, but simply because it pleases Him to do what He does.

In verse 4 we read that He blessed "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world,..."

In verse 5 we read "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

In verse 11 we are said to be "...predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"

It is true that some misguided souls have perverted this teaching of the Bible, as they have wrested also other scriptures to their own destruction, as they deny the responsibility of man under the sovereignty of God. Nevertheless, it remains true that God blesses Ephesians 1:7, "In whom we have redemption

through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace:" and not because any of His creatures properly deserves to be blessed.

MEANS OF BLESSING

The God Who blesses according to His own will plainly tells us in His word that He has appointed means on His side to bestow and on man's side to receive the blessings that He has chosen for us.

On God's side the means appointed for the bestowing of spiritual blessings are the written word and the personal office-work of the Holy Spirit. So we read that II Peter 1:4, "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature,..." Titus 3:5, He saved us "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;"

What is true of the beginning of spiritual blessing in our salvation is true also of additional blessings provided for God's people. It is through the written word, taught and applied by the Holy Spirit, that Christians are sanctified in His service and qualified for the reception of greater blessings to come.

On man's side, God has decreed that faith should come from hearing. Romans 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The Bible contains no promise of salvation or of spiritual blessings for unbelievers. The Ephesian saints trusted in Christ Ephesians 1:13, "...after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,"

Persons who vainly hope for themselves and hold out the vain hope to others that God may save and bless some people apart from His appointed means are willfully ignorant of our sovereign God and His revealed truth.

LIST OF BLESSINGS

In His magnificent paean of praise Ephesians 1:3-14, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we

have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Paul lists some of the spiritual blessings which God gives to His people in Christ. This list seems almost to divide itself into three groups of three blessings each, or at least we may so look upon them.

HOLY- IN LOVE

Holiness, blamelessness, and love are in God's purpose for us as stated in verse 4. In Christ we are made holy, that is, set apart from the world, and without blame because our Savior took all our blame upon Himself. These blessings are ours in love, God's love extended to us and the answering love "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

ADOPTION - REMISSION

Adoption, redemption (ransom), and forgiveness (remission) are said to be ours in verses 5-7. Thus, God has placed us in the position of sonship, has ransomed us from the captivity of Satan, and has sent away our sins from us so that, so far as eternal judgment is concerned, we are His beloved children set free and perfectly justified from all sin.

ADVANCE DEPOSIT

The last trio of spiritual blessings mentioned in these few verses are: knowledge, inheritance, and the seal of the Holy Spirit.

So in verse 9 we are told that God "made known unto us the mystery of his will"; in verse 11 that we "obtained an inheritance"; and in verse 13 that we "were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise."

The extent to which we learn what God makes known in His word, the extent to which we work out in our lives as His children His will thus revealed to us, will determine the extent of the inheritance which in a sense we have obtained but which we shall not fully possess until our Lord returns.

Finally, we are told (verse 14) that the Holy Spirit by Whom we were sealed "is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." The word earnest here means a token, or, in modern language, a down payment or advance deposit to insure the fulfillment of a purchase contract. Thus we learn that, great as are the spiritual

blessings received by God's people in this life, and certainly the greatest of these is the Holy Spirit Himself, yet this same Holy Spirit gives assurance of many more and much greater blessings to come.

By His grace may we joyfully receive the blessings that God has for us now, use them for His glory, and confidently look forward to that fullness of joy that shall be ours in His presence.

Chapter XIII

SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES

AS PRIESTS OF GOD WE ARE COMMANDED TO OFFER TO HIM SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES

I Peter 2:5, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood..."

These words were written to, I Peter 1:1-2, "...strangers . . . Elect according to the foreknow-ledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:..." in other words, to Christians. These Christians are compared to the stones of a building whose "chief corner stone" is Christ. I Peter 2:1-10.

As Christians we are said to be "...built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood..." which means that we are organized in Christ's church; and this is said to be for a definite purpose: that, is, I Peter 2:5, "...to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

NOT BULLS AND GOATS

A sacrifice was originally a slain animal offered to God as an atonement for sin. Hebrews 9:22, "...almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." But although this was the first kind of sacrifice known to man, the sacrifice or killing of animals as sin offerings was only a type of a higher sacrifice that would be acceptable to God. Hebrews 10:4, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." This higher sacrifice is the death on the cross of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Isaiah 53:10, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." God had no pleasure in the killing of animals that served only to remind sinful man of the coming Savior.

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross makes it possible for His true followers to offer sacrifices that God will accept "spiritual sacrifices." These are not sacrifices in the old sense of the word. They consist in our dying to our own wills that we may be sanctified or set apart to the doing of the will of God.

TO DO GOD'S WILL

Hebrews 9:22, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission." Hebrews 10:4, 8-10, 14-17, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins...Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all... For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

THROUGH CHRIST

Spiritual sacrifices are offered by true Christians and accepted by God because of the one great sacrifice of Christ. "Offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by (through) Jesus Christ." No sacrifice of ours is acceptable to God except it be brought to Him by Christ. Let us remember this. It is of utmost importance. We might sincerely try to do all the things mentioned below, apart, from Christ, by the exercise of our own wills, and God would refuse our offerings. Christ alone can make our sacrifices acceptable to God.

Here are some spiritual sacrifices mentioned in the Bible:

1. Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." God wants us to humble ourselves, to break down our own stubborn wills, that our hearts may be open to His truth.

SACRIFICES OF JOY

2. Psalm 27:6, "And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD." When we have died to the pleasures of sin and by God's grace have fought a good fight against the forces of evil, when God has given us victory over the enemies of our souls, Philippians 3:1, we too can "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. "

3. Psalm 107:21-22; 50:14, "Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing...Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:"

There is great danger of worshipping gifts instead of the Giver. We need to look beyond what God has done and thank Him for doing it.

SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

4. Hebrews 13:15, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Not only are we to thank God personally, but we should praise Him and confess His name before men. We are not to boast in ourselves, or even to permit other persons to suppose that we are due any praise for what we are or what we have. Psalm 44:8, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah."

5. Psalm 141:2, "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Instead of trying to do anything of or for ourselves we should always be in the attitude of prayer that God's will may be done. Matthew 6:10, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."

SACRIFICIAL GIVING

6. Hebrews 13:16; Philippians 4:18, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased...I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." People who love the Lord are glad to give of their means to carry on His work. They cheerfully sacrifice selfish desires that they may give to the glory of God.

7. Psalm 4:5, "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD." God did not save us that we might continue in sin, but that we should be able to do right. Titus 2:14, 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." Romans 8:3-4, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

A LIVING SACRIFICE

8. Romans 12:1-2, "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. And be not conformed 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."

JUDGE - LAWGIVER - KING

GOD HAS ALL POWER AND AUTHORITY
HE IS ABLE AND WILLING TO SAVE

Isaiah 33:22, "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us."

Isaiah's God, the God of other writers of inspired scripture, Ephesians 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:" He is not like the little, weak, helpless gods of this world's religions. Isaiah 40:17,23,13, Isaiah declares that "All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity...That bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity....Who hath directed the Spirit of the LORD, or being his counsellor hath taught him?"

It is plain and simple truth that the rationalists, the religious so-called liberals, the "neo-orthodox," and other teachers of modern religions have appeared on the scene far too late to offer advice to the God. Revelation 4:11; Psalm 76:10, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created...Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."

ALL POWER

Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Isaiah sums up all this power or authority of God in three words, Judge, Lawgiver, King, corresponding to the common threefold division of the powers of human government among judicial, legislative, and executive branches or agencies. But in the divine government, all these powers belong to one God.

OUR JUDGE

Genesis 18:25, God is "...the Judge of all the earth..." and there is no higher court to reverse His judgments. Hopeless indeed is the case of the sinner under His condemnation. But Isaiah calls Him "our judge," that is the Judge of His own people, and when He has justified us, there is no higher court to condemn us.

Romans 8:33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." If we have obtained by faith, Romans 4:8, "Blessed is the

man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." why should we fear any lesser judge?

OUR LAWGIVER

Again, God is the Lawgiver to all His creatures, so that even the heathen Gentiles Romans 2:11-16, "For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." But He is especially, says Isaiah, "our Lawgiver," the Lawgiver of His people, and His laws are designed for our instruction, guidance and protection.

In human government there is often conflict between legislative intent and judicial interpretation. Not so with the government of God. He has exactly the laws He needs to fit in with His own principles in judgment, and He knows exactly how to interpret and apply all these laws, because He Himself is both Judge and Lawgiver.

OUR KING

Psalms 103:19, "The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." but in a special sense Isaiah calls Him; Isaiah 33:22, "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us." He is enthroned not only in heaven but also in our hearts, and with our Lord we look forward to the time when His enemies shall become His footstool.

Laws and courts are ineffective without executive enforcement of legal judgments. In human governments the executive power, if separate and independent from judicial and legislative branches, may refuse, neglect, or fail to enforce laws or judicial decrees. But Nebuchadnezzar learned Daniel 4:35, "...all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"

In other words, God as Judge interprets the laws He has given, and as King will accomplish His purpose Matthew 5:18, that "...Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

HE WILL SAVE US

This is the God Who came from heaven to earth to seek and to save that which was lost. This is the God Who became man, and bore our sins in His body on the tree. This is the Savior Who died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. This is He Who rose again for our justification. This is the Fountain of Life, sending forth the invitation, Revelation 22:17, "...whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This is our Judge, our Lawgiver, our King, Who WILL SAVE all who put their trust in Him.

Chapter XV

WELLS WITHOUT WATER

TRUE CHRISTIANS RECEIVE SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS FROM GOD AND PASS THEM ON TO OTHERS

II Peter 2:17, "These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."

This text describes under two figures false or counterfeit Christians referred to in greater detail throughout the second chapter of Second Peter. Wells without water and clouds that give no rain, but are driven by the storm, are fitting illustrations of people who put on the appearance of Christianity, but have not within themselves the spiritual life which would be a blessing to themselves and to others.

FALSE TEACHERS

Outstanding among these wells without water are II Peter 2:1, "...false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies,..." These false teachers, we are told, will bring upon themselves swift destruction. They may be recognized by the heresies they teach, by their pernicious ways, and by their covetousness, as we may note in the first three verses of this chapter.

PRESUMPTUOUS

Other unjust (lost) persons, whom the Lord knows how to reserve unto the day of judgment to be punished, are said to be "presumptuous, self willed" and "not afraid to speak evil of dignities." These are professed Christians who habitually "walk after the flesh" and "despise government." Titus 1:16, "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him,..." Some of their sins are mentioned in detail: II Peter 2:12-15, "But these, as natural brute beasts,

made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."

SLAVES OF CORRUPTION

Among these false teachers are those who promise liberty to others through their counterfeit gospels, II Peter 2:19, though "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." In the last three verses of the chapter the apostle tells the truth about those fake Christians who are said to have escaped the pollutions of the world and then are entangled therein. II Peter 2:20-22, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

WATER OF LIFE

Such is the graphic description of these wells without water. Surely the figure would be clear enough even if we did not have it explained elsewhere in scripture that Christians are to be wells or fountains from which streams of spiritual life go forth to water thirsty souls about them.

But we are not dependent on our own intelligence or imagination for an understanding of this figure. Jesus Himself declared, John 4:14, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

This "well of water springing up into everlasting life" is designed of God not only to be a blessing to the soul that is saved, but a fountain of life flowing forth to bless others: John 7:38-39, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Lest we should not understand this spiritual language, John plainly tells us in the next verse "(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"

"FREELY GIVE"

So it appears from the scriptures that the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit are intended to be a means of blessing to other people and not merely for us to enjoy. So Jesus told His apostles on one occasion, Matthew 10:8, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

Paul told the church at Corinth, I Corinthians 15:3; "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 reminded the pastors of Ephesus, Acts 20:35, that Jesus said, "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"AS MANY AS"

This characteristic of a true Christian, that he has within him the Spirit of Christ so directing his own life that he becomes a source of spiritual blessing to others, is not, as taught by the false holiness cults, an extra special attainment of relatively few of God's people in a "second blessing," but is a proper trait of every true child of God.

Romans 8:14, 9, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God...But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Sad to say, there are multitudes of professed Christians who have not the Spirit of God, but they are not the children of God. They are "wells without water": they themselves have never drunk of the water of life proceeding from the throne of God, and so they have none of this water to offer to others.

They are "wells without water": they have the appearance of wells but they are only dry holes; they look like Christians but they have no life within.

Chapter XVI

BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN

HYPOCRISY, RATIONALISM, AND WORLDLINESS DESTROY THE FAITH AND POWER OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Matthew 16:6, "Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees."

Mark 8:15, "And he charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod."

When Jesus first spoke this warning to His disciples, they were so weak in faith and in spiritual understanding, Matthew 16:7-8, "And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?"

Let us carefully read the context, that we may better understand our Savior's warning, a warning as pertinent to our day as to the first generation of disciples.

TWO MIRACLES - ONE GREATER

Jesus performed two great miracles of feeding great multitudes of people with small supplies of food. On one occasion, starting with "five loaves and two fishes," He fed a multitude of "about five thousand men, beside women and children," and the disciples took up twelve (large) baskets full of fragments that remained. On another occasion, starting with seven loaves "and a few little fishes," He feed "four thousand men, beside women and children," and the disciples took up seven (small) baskets full of the broken food that was left. (Matthew 14:15-21; 15:32-38; 16:9-11.)

Now, both of these miracles reveal the divine creative power of our Master, but together they reveal something else: the first was a greater miracle than the second - less power was manifested in the second miracle than in the first.

LOSS OF FAITH AND POWER

Certainly the power of God in Christ had not changed. But He was working with and through His disciples, and evidently their faith was less on the second occasion than on the first. Their loss of faith resulted in loss of power hence the less notable miracle.

Jesus reviewed these simple facts to His disciples then He asked:

Matthew 16:11-12, "How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Mark 8:15 adds "...the leaven (doctrine) of Herod."

Behold the Satanic power of false doctrine, when the very apostles of our Lord were weakened in the faith and power of God by the working of false doctrine in their mind, and that while their divine Master was bodily present with them, and working mighty miracles before their eyes! May we take warning from their example, and from our Master's warning to them!

Essentially the same varieties of leaven, of false doctrine, that plagued the ancient disciples have been troubling God's people ever since, and perhaps never more so than in our own generation.

RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

Luke 12:1, "In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Seven times in one chapter (Matthew 23) we find Jesus exclaiming: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" In this remarkable chapter we have recorded for all time our Lord's faithful description of religious hypocrites who "...say, and do not." (Verse 3).

This is the doctrine of religious formalism, of learned heads, lazy hands, and lofty hearts. Matthew 23:1-12, "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

This is the doctrine of the dog in the manger, willing neither to enjoy the good gifts of God nor to allow others to enjoy them. Matthew 23:13, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

This is the doctrine of covetous religious zealots who have much love for money, for self, and for religion, but no love or regard for God or for their fellow creatures. Matthew 23:14-22, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."

This is the doctrine of "blind guides" who practice tithing and forget stewardship, who split hairs in theology and ignore ropes of iniquity. Matthew 23:23-24, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

This is the doctrine of false "holiness," a cleaning up of the outside that these pretenders may "appear righteous unto men." Matthew 23:25-28, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

This is the doctrine of the enemies of God, of those who hate the living testimony of His word while they pretend to worship Him, of those to whom the only good saints are dead ones. Matthew 23:29-36, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto your-selves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."

In short, this is the doctrine of salvation by works, the doctrine of stiff necked rebels who trust to themselves that they are righteous and reject the offer of the free gift of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. Matthew 23:37-39, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

RATIONALISM - NEO-ORTHODOXY

Acts 23:8, "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both."

We call them "Modernists" today, but this business of denying God's word goes back to the serpent in the garden of Eden; there is really nothing modern about it.

They call themselves "Liberals," but they are among the most, selfish and self centered of all people. Drawn up in their own stingy little souls, they find the simple account of God's great Gift, the vicarious blood atonement completely incredible. They prate of their broadminded tolerance and indeed they are tolerant of all kinds of error, no matter how silly, but they are most intolerant of the truth of God's word. They are liberal only in selling out the truth of God for the Devil's deceptions.

Perhaps the most popular name for the doctrine of the modern Sadducees is "NEO-ORTHODOXY." "Neo" means "new" and "orthodoxy" means "correct teaching." Perhaps the only thing wrong with this name is that THE THING IS NEITHER NEW NOR ORTHODOX.

But no matter under what name, Satan is still very much on the job, teaching the "doctrine of devils" and denying the vital truths of God's word.

BEWARE of "Neo-Orthodox" prattle about "myths" in the Bible. Attempts to justify the use of this word "myth" with reference to Bible history are dishonest insults to the intelligence of real Bible believers.

WORLDLINESS

Probably the best word to describe "the leaven of Herod" is "worldliness." The wickedness of Herod was notorious. He had religious interests. Mark 6:20, "For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and

observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly." but not enough to save the life of John the Baptist.

Herod represented compromise between Roman power of conquest and Jewish desire for independence. The Herodians supported Herod in order to retain some measure of self government.

So "the leaven of Herod" means compromise with the world: the doctrine that we can serve God and mammon.

Here is religion playing politics, seeking favors from Caesar rather than God.

Here is the "social gospel," trying to reform this world instead of preparing for the next.

Here is antinomianism, vainly believing that God's grace is a license to sin. Here is a fake David trying to fight in Saul's armour, without the good sense of the real David to cast it aside and fight God's battles in God's power.

Here is the prodigal son, wasting his substance in riotous living.

II Timothy 3:4, Here are "...lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

Here is an "up to date" Baptist, bringing the world into the church to corrupt its testimony rather than leading the church in faithful witnessing to a lost, dying, evil world.

"BEWARE OF THE LEAVEN"

Can any deny that the leaven of hypocrisy, the leaven of "Rationalism" (otherwise called "Liberalism" or "Neo-Orthodoxy"), and the leaven of worldliness have grossly corrupted the professed Christianity of our day?

Baptists today have more members, more money, and proportionately less spiritual faith, and power than ever before in history, since the Lord Jesus organized His apostles into the first Baptist church.

Our churches have become centers of spiritually bankrupt forms and programs, our seminaries have been taken over by "Neo-Orthodox" infidels, and our people have become so filled with the cares and pleasures and desires of this world that the word of God is choked off in their hearts and become unfruitful.

PURGE IT OUT!

I Corinthians 5:6, "...Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" True, the apostle was writing primarily to a church, but the same principle applies to individual souls and to human institutions set up to serve as agencies of the churches.

The remedy is drastic, but dire danger demands it: I Corinthians 5:7, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:"

In many cases it is already too late: the leaven of false doctrine has so permeated the mass that we can only turn away from the whole mess and start anew with God.

May all those who know God, the truth of His word, and the power of His Spirit "Take heed, and beware" of hypocrisy, of rationalism, of worldliness, ere the leaven of these false doctrine robs us of our faith and power!

Chapter XVII

CASTING DOWN IMAGINATIONS

HUMAN REASONINGS OPPOSED TO GOD MUST BE PULLED DOWN

II Corinthians 10:3-6, "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."

Human beings are prone to err in opposite directions in their estimate of the place of human reason in man's relationship to God. On the one hand we find the kind of superstition characteristic of Medieval Catholicism and other religions of darkness, where men abdicate their individual responsibility and, in despite of the intelligence that God gave them, turn over all their religion, and hence all their lives, to an all powerful "church" or other human authorities. On the other hand we find religious anarchy, the so called "rule of reason," which in effect makes every man his own god.

A WAY OF TRUTH

The Bible presents a way of truth between these opposite errors: the truth that every man must give an account of himself to God and must not allow anyone else to do his thinking for him; the truth that no man has a right to think contrary to the knowledge of God that God has given us or made available to us in His written word.

Multiplication of contradictory religious sects and doctrine, and even of breaches of doctrine and fellowship among Baptists, are among the reasons for the phenomenal growth of Catholicism and modernism in recent years. Multitudes of discouraged souls, dismayed by the confusion of tongues among religious leaders and teachers, find it much easier to accept the claims of bogus

authority or to reject all authority than to search and find out for themselves the truth of God.

Baptists who know the truth could in some measure check these tendencies toward irrational Catholicism and toward the false rationalism of so called modernism and neo-orthodoxy, but Baptists have become denominationally fat and prosperous: and Baptists willing to risk their denominational standing for the sake of the testimony of Christ have become few and far between.

FALSE REASONINGS

The word for "imagination" II Corinthians 10:5, "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;" could better be translated "reasoning." The reasoning and arguments of human minds corrupted by sin and Satan are among the high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, and good soldiers of Jesus Christ, engaged in a great spiritual warfare, are to be continually pulling down these false reasoning.

We cannot truly claim to be fully possessed of the mind of Christ until we have brought "...into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" Let us note some of our wrong thinking, some of our false reasoning, that need to be pulled down and brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

PRIDE

Pride in our own virtue, pride in our own accomplishments, pride in our own thoughts, pride in our own reputation, pride in whatever we think we have to be proud of (and generally the less people have to be proud of the prouder they are). Pride is one of the strongholds in which guilty sinners and rebellious saints take refuge to avoid surrender to God.

Pride must be pulled down and brought low before we can get right with God, James 4:6, "...God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." Scripture quotations could be multiplied to show the folly of pride and the necessity of its removal from our thoughts if we would enjoy the salvation of God.

FALSE HUMILITY

There is hardly a Christian virtue that Satan does not counterfeit. Paul warns us of a "voluntary humility" of a man "vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Colossians 2:18-23, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and

knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body: not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh." It is possible, this scripture teaches, to put on a great show of wisdom in will worship and humility and neglecting of a body not in any honor, while at the same time all these pretensions are really for "the satisfying of the flesh."

True humility is not attained merely by willing to be humble, nor is it expressed by boasting of how humble we are. If we are satisfied with Satan's counterfeit humility we shall fail of the true: let us therefore tear down this deceptive stronghold by getting a good honest look at ourselves in the light of God's word.

When we really get to know something of God in His infinite power, wisdom, holiness, justice, and love, and something of ourselves as His word reveals us, we shall not need to try to be humble. We cannot be anything but humble before Him.

RIVALRY

Galatians 5:19-21, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel-lings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." These "emulations" or rivalries attempts to get ahead of somebody or everybody else. Competitive "campaigns," races, contests, or rivalries with winning and losing "sides" or "teams" are altogether out of place in Christian service.

It is right to seek rewards from our Master for faithfulness to Him, but wrong to try to get such rewards by getting ahead of our brethren. Compare: Matthew 6:19-21, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 20:20-28, "Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I

am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:35-45, "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Also John 21:19-23, "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. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?"

Our God is great enough, His service is wide enough, and His ability to reward is sufficient that there is plenty of room for us all to earn His rewards without trying to snatch them from our brethren.

We can never get as close to our Master by trying to push ourselves ahead as we can by forgetting ourselves and trying to help our brethren, even (or, rather, especially) when this may mean that we are helping them to get ahead of ourselves.

LAZINESS

Some ignorant and lazy Christians, or so called Christians, say that they are satisfied to believe that they are saved and on their way to heaven, and care nothing about earning rewards for a faithful life. It is rather difficult to believe that such a "Christian" is saved at all.

I Corinthians 9:24, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." John 8:42; 14:23, "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...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."

DOCTRINAL QUIRKS

Acts 20:30, "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." So spoke Paul to the Ephesians bishops, and both before and since that time there have been men who have set up strongholds of strange twists of doctrine partly to avoid phases of truth unpalatable to them, and partly for no other purpose than "to draw away disciples after them."

All these imaginings of men's hearts, all these reasoning and arguments of depraved minds, all these strongholds of heresy contrary to the plain teaching of God's written word, are proper objects of spiritual attack and are to be pulled down in our own minds and in the minds of others so far as our testimony and influence can reach.

"LIBERALISM"

Finally, a most popular stronghold of vain, depraved reasoning in our day is so called religious liberalism, a fake liberalism that considers itself free not merely to sell the Savior for 30 pieces of silver but to trample truth in the gutter for no recompense but popularity.

These so called liberals maintain a liberal attitude toward anything but the truth: they can tolerate any religion except the religion of the virgin born, bodily resurrected, coming again Jesus Christ. They adore their own little brains and freely fulminate their own fancies, but they cannot abide the blood of the Lamb or the word of His testimony.

Down with these strongholds of sin: down with false reasoning; down with pride and with false humility; down with rivalry and with laziness; down with doctrinal quirks and with "liberalism"! Ye soldiers of the cross, arise to the battle! Up, with the sword of the Spirit, the word of God: bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ!

Chapter XVIII

CUNNINGLY DEvised MYTHS

RELIGIOUS MYTHS DO NOT COME FROM THE BIBLE, BUT FROM DEPRAVED MINDS

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."

II Corinthians 11:15, "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." Satan's ministers, talk much nowadays about the "myths" of the Bible. From seminary chairs occupied by infidels wearing a cloak of Christianity, and from pulpits occupied by their disciples, the prince of darkness, masquerading as an angel of light, sends forth a ceaseless stream of propaganda to the effect that, we are not to take the Bible seriously in a historical sense that it is largely a book of myths, myths indeed, which may convey some valuable spiritual instruction, just as moral lessons may be drawn from Aesop's fables but nevertheless myths.

When Bible believers not yet inured against shock at such blasphemy express their horror of these doctrine of devils, there comes an immediate protest of innocence of evil intent. The use of the word "myth," we are told, does not necessarily mean that the user intends to cast doubt upon the truth of the "story." And we are supposed to be ignorant enough to believe that these false teachers are ignorant enough to use words calculated to destroy the faith which they still believe even while they deny it in both practice and precept.

A MONSTROUS MIRACLE

One thing harder to believe and understand than all the miracles of the Bible is that an educated and otherwise intelligent man can be sincere in professing to worship a God Whose word he flagrantly denies. But, whether sincere or not, such a man is none the less wrong, and an instrument of Satan of whom God's people need to beware.

The real myths of religion are not to be found in the Bible, but come forth from the depraved minds of wicked men under the inspiration of Satan. Let us look at a few popular religious myths current in our day, part of Satan's bag of tricks used by his ministers to deceive unwary Christians.

THAT GOD MIGHT LIE

Of course, the devil is too smart to call God a liar in so many words: put so baldly, the idea would be so shocking to God's people who know something of

His true character that they would immediately recognize Satan as the real liar and blasphemer that he is and flee from his presence.

No: Satan's method is merely to cast the shadow of doubt upon God's word, and in effect to deny it by propagating lies, usually with enough mixture of truth to make the lies plausible to the simpleminded. This was his method in the Garden of Eden, and it worked so well that he has been using it ever since.

THAT THE BIBLE IS MYTHICAL

A sneakier snare for silly souls is Satan's suggestion that, though it may be true that God Himself cannot lie, Hebrews 6:18, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie..." Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Yet we have no sure way of knowing God: the Bible, Satan and his ministers tell us, is just another book, better than most, perhaps, but still just a collection of religious writings by well meaning men who learned something about God and did the best they could to write down some of their experiences and ideas.

Of course, we are told in effect, these good men of old did not have all the advantages of modern scholarship. Still, considering their limitations, they had some pretty good ideas (rather primitive, naturally) and we can learn a few things from their imperfect groping for the truth, though not as much as they might learn from us if they were fortunate enough to live in our enlightened age, and so on, and on, ad nauseam.

Now, the Bible represents itself to be the pure word of God, and if it is not so it is a fearful fraud. Even while we pity we can have some respect for an honest infidel, but it is hard to either pity or respect the hypocrite that in one breath pretends to regard the Bible as a sacred book and in another pronounces it full of error.

Take thy choice, thou hypocritical denier of God's word: if God be God, believe Him; if His word be not true, claim not to believe in any god worthy of a creature's worship. But if thou do so claim, know even so that God's people who know His truth may recognize the falseness of thy pretensions.

THAT OTHERS MUST INTERPRET FOR US

Baptists through the centuries have shed their blood for the principle of soul liberty, the freedom and competence of the individual soul to approach God directly through Jesus Christ as revealed in His word, without the necessity of any other mediator or of any authoritative teacher except the Holy Spirit. But now we hear from so called Baptists the strange Catholic doctrine that ordinary

Christians cannot understand the Bible: that some higher authority in this world must interpret for us and we are bound to accept that interpretation.

I have heard a Baptist Sunday School "teacher" stumbling through the comments in a "quarterly," hardly able to read, but practically sure that the comments were inspired and infallible. I have heard a Baptist "preacher" with a seminary degree for whom the answer to any theological question is to be found in what "Dr. Big Name" said. Such "teachers" and "preachers" may be far apart educationally, but spiritually they are equally to be pitied.

John 7:17, Jesus said: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." I John 2:18-27, "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. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him."

THAT CHRIST'S CHURCH HAS FAILED

A myth almost universally believed and enthusiastically propagated by the ministers of Satan is the fable that the church which Jesus established to carry on His work utterly failed, but that the imaginary "invisible church" of human vanity or the counterfeit "churches" of human invention are doing a better job and will soon "bring in the kingdom."

Catholics and Protestants agree on the myth that Catholicism is the oldest existing "church," but most Protestants "protest" that Catholicism is apostate rather than apostolical Christianity. Baptists ignorant of their heritage join in the chorus, allowing themselves to be wrongly classed with Protestants.

Jesus sarcastically reproved the Pharisees for acknowledging as their fathers the ancient persecutors of the prophets, adding in bitter irony: Matthew 23:29-32, reading only verse 32, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers." It is no accident, but a natural consequence, that so called Baptists who claim a

Catholic ancestry show strong tendencies toward Catholic style organization and practice.

THAT HUMAN PROGRAMS CAN SUCCEED

Characteristic of those who despise the quiet operations of the Spirit of God is the myth that human plans and programs can succeed where the word and Spirit of God have failed. To such people it is unbelievable that Baptist churches preserved a ministry and testimony faithful to the word of God for eighteen centuries before there was a Southern Baptist Convention, and to many Southern Baptists it is incredible that Southern Baptists carried on worldwide missionary work for generations before there was a "Cooperative Program."

So not only among Baptists but among Christians generally the people who have least faith in the promises and in the revealed purposes of God are most ready to put their faith in human plans and programs, making these things their idols instead of turning back to God.

Acts 19:23-28, "And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

Diana of the Ephesians, commanded no more devotion of her craftsmen than do modern hierarchical denominations of their blind followers.

THAT WE CAN AVOID RESPONSIBILITY

When all else has failed, Satan quiets the consciences of Bible believers with the myth that we can shift to some church, committee, or board the responsibility for the heresies we abhor. Not so. Romans 14:12, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Even a church, even a true church of the Lord Jesus, has no rightful dominion over the conscience of an individual member, who must in the end Galatians 6:5, "...bear his own burden." So when our Lord was shut out of His own church at Laodicea, He appealed for fellowship with the individual members. Revelation 3:14-22, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would

thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Much less does any board or commission, originally created by messengers of the churches to serve as agencies of the churches, have the right to demand support of a program well calculated to destroy what these churches have believed and stood for in past years. Well may we ask today, as Moses asked. Exodus 32:26, "...Who is on the LORD'S side?..."

Chapter XIX

BE YE SEPARATE

GOD'S PEOPLE MUST BE SEPARATED FROM SIN IN ORDER TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM

II Corinthians 6:17,18, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Today's fashion in religion is compromise. It is supposed to be all right to believe anything, true or false, so long as you do not have convictions strong enough to embarrass anyone that believes the opposite. Unity in Christ in the one faith of His word is unthought of; there is much mouthing about union and brotherhood, but what is meant is union with the enemies of Christ who ignore or deny the authority of His word.

Modern "Christianity" has generally abandoned the hope of victory over the world, and so is joining hands with the world against the commandments of God while still wearing His name, taking His name in vain.

The promise of divine fellowship in our text is linked to a command to separation. The apostle then exhorts us II Corinthians 7:1, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

IMMORALITY

However much their practice may belie their profession, I suppose there are few Christians today that would deny their obligation to cleanse themselves from every defilement of the flesh: that is, from gross sins of immorality. Yet we need constantly to remind ourselves what we must do to cleanse ourselves and stay cleansed from such defilement.

First, we are commanded not to sin. 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 righteous:"

Second, we need to recognize that sin is not only in the outward act, but in the thoughts and desires which may lead to such an act. Matthew 5:28, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." I John 3:15, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Proverbs 24:9, "The thought of foolishness is sin:..."

CONFESSION

Third, if we are truly God's children, Galatians 3:26, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." we, are to remember 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 righteous:" and believe I John 1:9, that "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:7, "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."

Fourth, and this is the point emphasized in our text, we must learn to hate sin as God hates sin, whether in our own lives or in the lives of others; we must Ephesians 5:11, "...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." we must be separated from sin and, in a sense, from sinners.

UNEQUAL YOKES

This separation does not mean Pharisaism; it does mean: II Corinthians 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

Our need for cleansing from "filthiness" or defilement of spirit is even greater than our need for cleansing from fleshly sins, but the sad fact is that, for

lack of scriptural teaching, God's people generally cannot even recognize their spiritual defilement as the horrible sin that it is in the sight of God.

IDOLATRY

Exodus 20:3, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (in my presence), is the very first of the ten commandments, and literal idolatry (the bowing down to or serving of images) is specifically forbidden in the second.

But images need not be of material substance: men may form mental images and worship the vain fancies of their own imagination. So we are told that I Samuel 15:23, "...rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry...." and covetousness Colossians 3:5, "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:"

One of the most popular idols in modern Christianity is "ecumenicalism," the dream of a world "church" ruled by a self constituted hierarchy or religious oligarchy instead of a pope, but with a faith more remote from the Bible than Catholicism has ever dared to be.

On the other hand, countless Christians have made their particular "church" or "denomination" an idol in their hearts, giving to its name or its "program" a loyalty and devotion that ought to be given only to God.

Modern false prophets and their followers who sacrifice Bible truth for the sake of denominationalism, interdenominationalism, or "undenominationalism" are just as guilty of idolatry as the worshipers of any graven image ever set up: and idolatry is as great an abomination to God today as it ever was.

HERESY

It is a shocking fact that some nominal Baptists seem to think that it does not matter what a man believes, says, writes, or does so long as he calls himself a Baptist of some variety or other he must be free to serve Satan in the ranks of and at the expense of God's people, and other Baptists in the same "denomination" are bound to support him in his devilish work.

Freedom for heretics but enslavement of the faithful for the support of their enemies, is the rule sought for and now much practiced among Baptists, to mention no others. God's rule is different

Romans 16:17, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Titus 3:10-11, "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."

WHOSE FELLOWSHIP

We have to choose whose fellowship we desire: the fellowship of God and His faithful servants, or the fellowship of Satan and his hosts of hypocrites. We cannot have both.

II Chronicles 19:2, "...Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD?... "

II Corinthians 6:17-18, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Chapter XX

REJOICE EVER MORE

GOD WHO DOES NOT CHANGE GIVES JOY THAT IS NOT DISTURBED BY TEMPORAL TROUBLES

I Thessalonians 5:16, "Rejoice evermore." II Corinthians 6:10, "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;..."

Surely there are joys and pleasures in life as experienced by all the living creatures of God. But in this world these joys and pleasures are generally "for a season"; creatures and their circumstances change as the weather; joy and grief, pleasure and pain, change places in normal life faster than day gives way to night. But God does not change, and His children who know Him are commanded to "rejoice always," because despite all the changes in this world we have unchanging reasons for joy.

JOY TO ALL PEOPLE

Luke 2:10, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." "All people" should be translated "all the people," meaning all the people of God, with first reference to the Jews.

Now, the historical facts of our Savior's birth, His wonderful life, His vicarious death, and His triumphant resurrection are not affected by our disappointments or sorrows, but we can and should rejoice the more in Him as other and apparent sources of joy are cut off.

GLORIOUS AND MIGHTY WORKS

Following the record of one of Jesus' miracles of mercy we read, Luke 13:17, "And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him."

Luke 19:37, "And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;"

Psalm 126:3, If "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." we have the more reason to rejoice as we need His help the more.

LIGHT OF THE GENTILES

When the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia rejected the testimony of Paul and Barnabas, these pioneer missionaries boldly turned to the Gentiles: Acts 13:47-48, "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. 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."

Those of us that are Gentiles may well rejoice continually: Romans 3:29, "Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:"

RECEIVING . . . SALVATION

God's people greatly rejoice in Him in the very midst of "manifold temptations," because these temptations or testing are designed to bring it to pass that the proof of their faith I Peter 1:6-9, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

So far is our salvation from being hindered or damaged by our trials that on the contrary these very trials are among the means of our obtaining the salvation of our souls. Why not rejoice?

REJOICING IN HOPE

Experience of salvation already received provides encouragement Romans 12:12, for "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;"

of greater salvation to come. Romans 5:1-2, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

It is only reasonable that the more miserable we are in the things of this world, the more we rejoice in the hope of a better life in a better world to come.

FULL ASSURANCE OF HOPE

The hope of God's people, as described in the Bible, is quite different from the vain hopes of this world. It is not the vague, uncertain "hope" of false religions. No: the inspired writers declare, Hebrews 6:11, "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:"

In fact, the Bible gives us no reason to believe that we belong to Christ unless our hope is such as to give us confidence and joy:

Hebrews 3:6, "But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

True, we cannot yet look upon Revelation 21:27, "...the Lamb's book of life." but God does give His children here and now abundant evidences of His saving grace. All that will believe His word, I John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

So Jesus commanded His disciples: Luke 10:20, "...rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." This writing is eternal: Revelation 13:8, "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 17:8, "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." and will never be blotted out Revelation 3:5, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." Well may we rejoice that changes below do not affect our standing above!

REJOICING IN TRUTH

God's children have love in their hearts. I John 4:7-12, "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. In this

was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." I Corinthians 13:6, "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;" The truth of God's word is forever, Psalm 119:89, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

What joy it is to know that all the lies of Satan, all the contradictions of this world, and even all the foolish fads and fancies of human religions and theologies cannot affect the unchanging truth of the word of God! And the people who really know and love God will increasingly rejoice in His truth as they are increasingly indignant at the increasing iniquity of this present evil world.

JOY IN TRIBULATION

Romans 5:2-5, "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 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."

When we come to know something of how God makes room in our hearts for His love, we can learn not only to rejoice but even to "glory" in the tribulations that God is pleased to use to develop our character and make us fit for His company. Jesus was speaking of one kind of tribulation when He said: Matthew 5:11-12, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

JOY IN HIS RETURN

Our present joys in our Lord and in His salvation are but a foretaste of the greater joys that shall be ours in His presence, and especially at His return:

Revelation 19:7-9, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."

Romans 13:11, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

The long night of this sinful world is near its end; the dawning of the Sun of righteousness is almost upon us. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him."

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