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**THE TOUCH OF JESUS**  
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Singing in the Shadows  
Christian Living in a Modern World  
Bud Robinson, a Brother Beloved  
Your Life, Make the Most of It  
Christ and the Bible  
A Christian, What It Means to Be One  
Holiness, the Heart of Christian Experience

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## INTRODUCTION

The most important person in history is Jesus. He was unique and incomparable among earth's great. He was supernatural in His origin, in His coming, in His works, in His death, in His eternal being.

In the days of His flesh the touch of His fingers opened sightless eyes. A few words from His lips stilled the tempest and quieted raging billows. A look from His eyes smote the guilty soul with repentance.

What is of even more importance is that almost two thousand years afterward the constant touch of His presence enables anyone to live the good life -- a life of purity, earnestness, faith and love amidst wickedness, indifference, scoffing and hatred.

The unregenerate see what they look for: confusion, darkness, turmoil, sordidness, sin. The Christian with a living hope and in implicit confidence sees Jesus and follows Him through green pastures and beside still waters.

The message of the manger is now the gospel of Jesus Christ -- the gospel that is being proclaimed in these pages.

God speaks to men! To the fathers by the prophets; to all men by His Son, the Living Word. God now speaks to men by the inspired, written Word. And that Word is proclaimed to us and interpreted for us through anointed lips of clay.

These gospel messages call us from the engrossing things of earthly life beckoning us deeper into the joys of communion with a risen Christ. Then with hearts that burn within us we daily look for His appearing.

Dr. Chapman's following should be considerably increased because of these sermons. As educator, editor, writer, preacher, and executive, he has already made for himself a place of wide and enduring influence. In these messages it is apparent that he lives with the touch of Jesus on his heart and mind at the same time keeping his finger on the pulse of humanity.

P. H. LUNN

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## 1 -- THE TOUCH OF JESUS

And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them (Mark 10:13).

And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him (Luke 22:51).

Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened (Matthew 29:30).

And he touched her hand and the fever left her: and she arose and ministered unto them (Matthew 8:15).

And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed (Matthew 8:3).

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid (Matthew 20:34).

The touch of Jesus makes all the difference in the world. In ancient times men were uncertain from what occurrence to date the beginning of time. The Jews calculated from the Exodus from Egypt. The Greeks dated from certain of the Olympic games. The Romans counted from the founding of their city or from the ascension of some emperor. The Egyptians tried to calculate from the arising of certain dynasties. Other nations made their kings the basis for beginning calculation of time. There was confusion everywhere, because men could not agree that any occurrence was of sufficient importance to make it the beginning of chronology. Then Jesus came and touched the calendar, and soon, without any formal announcement or authoritative decree, men began to count history in its relation to the birth of Christ. Things before His birth were "Before Christ;" and those after were "In the year of our Lord." Not Christians only, but skeptics and pagans date their legal papers and their social correspondence in relation to the one universally acknowledged occurrence -- the appearing of our Lord on this earth of ours.

A little while ago I was driving through the southern part of the state of Michigan when I saw a roadside sign reading, "Battle Creek, best known city of its size in the world." But without hesitation I rejected the claim, for I know a town not one-fifth the size of Battle Creek that is much better known. Battle Creek's claim to notoriety is based upon its preparation of foods for the bodies of men. But Bethlehem is the true "House of Bread," for it was there that Jesus was born. The ancient prophet marked Bethlehem as small among the towns of Judah. But one starlit night an angel announced to wondering shepherds, "Today there is born unto you in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord," and Bethlehem became the best known city in the world. Its fame and glory reached even to heaven from whence came an angelic choir to sing the first Christmas carol, "On earth peace and good will to men." Today three hundred million people turn their hearts to that little town at Christmas time and say, "Let us go up to Bethlehem." We were there at Christmas time in 1937. We helped to sing the carols in the "field of the shepherds," and returned to the Church of the Nativity for the celebration of the only birthday that the whole world knows.

Palestine itself, although of great meaning to the Jews, really never became "the holy land" to the world until Jesus touched it, walked on its roads, prayed in its mountains, preached in its fields and died on its cross of wood.

I stood one day at Sychar's well while the attendant placed candles in the bucket and let them down to show us the depth, and then drew up water that we might take a draft. But I felt that it was unbecoming me to drink that water, for on the curb there once sat a dusty Traveler who offered living water to the woman and to all who will take it at His hand. Hot Springs, Warm Springs, and all the watering places of the earth pale in importance in comparison to Jacob's Well at Sychar, just because Jesus touched that well.

The old synagogue at Capernaum is in ruins now. We visited it late in the evening and tarried until the shadows were long. We have seen the Taj Mahal, of India, the Temple of Heaven, in China, Karnak in Egypt, St. Peter's in Rome, St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey in London, the great Shinto temple at Kyoto, the famed cathedrals at Lima and Buenos Aires, and famous mosques over much of the Mohammedan world. But none of these compare with the ruins at Capernaum, for those walls and pillars once echoed the voice of One who "spake as never man spake." Just the fact that Jesus touched that place exalts it above them all. He walked on those paving stones and called Levi from the place for collecting customs between the synagogue and the lake shore, not more than a hundred yards away. The whole region would be poor and unknown, only Jesus touched it and that exalted it.

But the touch of Jesus shows up best in human lives. He touched the little children. Mothers were anxious to have Him do so. It is not said what effect that touch had; but I believe it had more than a symbolic meaning. Perhaps that touch healed any ailing child. Perhaps it made any dull child bright. Perhaps it took away any unusual naughtiness. Any way it made a difference, and the mothers pressed up to get that gentle hand laid upon their little ones -- and it made a difference. I know they say we should not look back, but when I review that scene I instinctively say: I think when I read that sweet story of old, When Jesus was here among men: How He called little children as lambs to His fold, I should like to have been with them then.

That touch upon children exalted and glorified childhood, and wherever Jesus has gone little children have been touched and blessed. The weakness of childhood appeals to Christ and finds its answer always in His gentleness and power.

Then there was the touch of Jesus upon deaf ears that caused them to hear, and His touch upon blind eyes which caused them to see. His touch upon a woman's fevered hand which caused her restlessness to cease. His touch upon the leper which brought him healing and cleansing. His touch upon the troubled disciples on the mount of transfiguration which brought them relief and assurance. Yes, the touch of Jesus makes all the difference in the world. We all need our ears touched that we may hear the voice of God. We need our eyes opened that we may see with clear vision. We need His touch upon our fevered spirits that we may have rest. We need His touch upon our hearts that they may be made clean. We need His touch of assurance that we may not fear in the gathering clouds -- clouds of either sorrow or glory.

The ancients accounted the touch of the leper defiling, and modern people shun this touch for hygienic reasons. Anyone would draw away from any attempt of a leper to reach and touch him, but Jesus reached out His hand on purpose and touched the leper. The fountain of purity in Christ was so much fuller than the fountain of impurity in the leper that instead of Jesus' becoming defiled, the leper was made clean. There is cleansing in His touch.

In what unfamiliar surroundings those disciples found themselves on the mount! Here was their own Master transformed into the likeness of resurrection glory, garments whiter than any fuller on earth could whiten them, and face shining with such light as was never seen on land or sea. Here, too, were Moses, representative of the resurrection, and Elijah, representative of those who shall be transformed without seeing death, and the three talking together calmly of the things yet to come. The disciples were mortal men in the vestibule of heaven, earth -- weighted saints in a miniature Second Coming of Christ. They were conscious of their incongruity, were anxious and afraid. Then the Master came and touched them, and they were assured. Since Jesus knew and acknowledged them, they were no longer affrighted. His touch drives fear away.

But let us come now to think of the symbolic meaning of the touch of Jesus. In the first place, the fact that it was but a touch suggests the immeasurable power that was behind the touch. The tasks were difficult, so difficult indeed as to be considered impossible with men. That one born blind should be made to see; that one deaf and dumb should be made to hear and speak; that a leper should be healed and cleansed -- why the very mention of such things causes men to draw back and ask to be excused. Joram, the king of Israel, considered the request that he should recover a leper but a pretense for trouble between Syria and his nation, seeing none but God could cleanse a leper. But it was normal for people to ask the impossible of Christ. They did not appear embarrassed to come and say, "This cannot be done, O Lord, but please you do it." And Jesus did it with a touch. There are few instances in which He used even one full hand, and none where He used both hands or asked for help from others. His touch is enough to accomplish the impossible, for behind that touch are the infinite and inexhaustible resources of the eternal God. "Nothing is too hard for Jesus, no man can work like Him." There is the show of untapped resources in Jesus in that no task demanded more than the touch of His fingers. His touch upon a few loaves and a few small fishes was enough to multiply them sufficiently to feed an army. In Him dwelleth all the

fullness of the Godhead in bodily form and the touch of His fingers is enough for any task assigned.

In the second place, the fact that He touched was a symbol of his proximity and intimacy. He did not simply look or motion, He came right over to where they were and singled them out with His touch. Jesus made small mention of nations and of crowds. His concern was for the individual -- the individual in need.

Sometimes the very vastness of things and the multiplicity of people are discouraging. David looked at the star-studded heavens above him and then fell to wondering how and why God should give any attention to man. I have often had the same experience. The universe is so broad in its scope and so perfect in its finish that I feel lonesome in it and am depressed by my sense of insignificance. Then I like to go back to Galilee and stand on the fringe of the crowd while the preacher from Nazareth inquires about the value of a sparrow, and is told that one sparrow is worth only one-half of the smallest coin in current use, and that it takes two sparrows to register in the scale of values. But the Master says, "Not even one sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father's care." And I gain courage, for if God takes account of that which is worth only half of the first step in the scale of values, then perhaps He will take notice of me. And when my strength is depleted and my courage is weak, I do not get much help from the giant redwoods of California, or the sturdy oaks of Virginia. Rather I long to go again to Galilee and hear the Nazarene say of Himself, "A bruised reed will he not break, and smoking flax will he not quench till he send forth judgment unto victory." I am that bruised reed and that smoking flax, and I find in Him promise of healing and restoration and victory. In a universe so large the telescope cannot trace its boundaries, and so delicate and perfect that the microscope cannot reveal its essential content, I am assured by the fact that He stoops to touch the insignificant and the lowly.

But history, even though true, and symbols, be they ever so beautiful, cannot meet the deep needs of our lives. Our souls cry out for present reality. We need the touch of Jesus now. We need His touch upon our spiritual ears that we may distinguish the voice of God in His Word and in His providences. We need His touch upon our eyes that we may have that true perspective that will enable us to distinguish the transient and passing from the permanent and eternal. We need His touch upon our minds to make us wise unto salvation. We need His touch upon our hearts that they may be quickened and cleansed. We need His touch of assurance that shall make us restful in either the place of trial or the vestibule of glory.

Paul was commissioned to be a witness, as well as a minister, and I feel that I am likewise entitled to testify. I cannot boast of my early religious training nor of my ecclesiastical pedigree. I have no good works to commend me either to God or men. I do not glory in any degree of penitence I may at any time possess or of any measure of consecration to which I can justly lay claim. All these are human qualities, and I pass them over. The thing of which I boast today is that when I came to Jesus Christ as a lad of fifteen He touched me in pardoning mercy and made me know I was His own. When I came in full consecration He touched me in cleansing fullness and gave me a pure heart, and he has touched me with frequent assurances all down through these forty years since the time when I knew Him first. This is my solemn and true testimony. I thank God for clear recollections of His touch upon my heart. That touch has allayed my restless spirit, as it did the fever-tossed woman in Simon's house, and I have been soothed and assured and rested.

I have heard that a wise general never attempts to defend too long a line. Forty years is a long time, as men count, and there are abundant reasons why the accuser can file charges against me for thoughts and words and actions in this interim. I have never been a formal backslider. There has not been an hour in all these years that I did not profess my love for Jesus Christ and my faith in Him as Saviour and Lord. But the line is too long, and I am not content to let my present standing and future destiny depend upon an unbroken linking up with that first touch He gave my unworthy heart. Ah, no, He touched me twenty years ago, ten years ago, one year ago, last month, last week, this morning. Yea, I say it to the praise of His mercy, He has touched me today. At the morning watch He came along and laid His hand upon me. Closer still, and praise be unto His matchless name, He touches my spirit now. I refuse to defend any yesterday whatsoever. He assures me now. I account all the past as cleared and approved by the fact that this side of everything else I have felt and known His tender touch, and if I have ever done anything for which a reward is due, I am paid in full and up to date by the sheer joy my poor heart feels and knows in this moment of assurance and rest.

O blessed Jesus, I ask no other favor than this, Thy approving, assuring touch. In the realization of this blessed moment every earthly value is swallowed up. I ask not for riches or for popularity or for pleasure or even for bodily comfort and health. If any of these are given they are Thy free gifts, and as such I shall accept and use them. But as between poverty of property and riches of spirit, I unhesitatingly choose riches of spirit. Make me as poor in purse as Thou wilt, but do make me rich in Thy grace. I utterly disregard the standing men give. If men love and approve me, let it be for Thy sake and for Thy glory. If they vote against me and spitefully use me, let that too be for Thy sake. Whichever comes I shall be glad, and as to creature comforts, O blessed Jesus, let these be entirely as Thou wilt. If I can prove Thy faithfulness better in a tent or in a grass hut than in a house of wood or brick or stone, O give me that which will give me the best chance to advance Thy kingdom. Like Livingstone in Africa, I would count nothing as having value except in relation to Thy kingdom. Food and clothing! ah, these I would not regard, and, thank God, I do not have to be happy. I would pass over this too as incidental. Health, after which so many strive, I would possess only so much of it as I can use in extending Thy kingdom. I would account both pleasure and pain as incidental impostors, and would exchange them all for holiness of heart and purity of thought. Even heaven itself I would subject to Thy presence and fellowship. No matter how much that fair world may vary from the picture I have drawn, I shall know it is heaven, and I shall love it as it is, if only Thou art there. Come now once more, O blessed Christ, and touch me with the touch of healing, cleansing and assurance. Touch me now, I sincerely pray, and touch me often along life's way, and when I come at last to heaven, as I assuredly plan to do through Thy wonderful grace, and when I stand bewildered amidst the glories of that glad morning, come Thou, as Thou didst to Peter and James and John on the holy mount, and touch me, and immediately I shall be at home. Thy recognition shall drive away all my sense of strangeness and I shall be happy forever. Amen and amen!

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2 -- THE MESSAGE OF THE MANGER  
(A Christmas Sermon)

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger (Luke 2:7).

Every occurrence in the history of our world must take its place both as to date and as to importance from its relationship to the coming of Jesus Christ to be the Saviour of men, for that coming of His is the central date and the most important event that has ever taken place on this earth.

The birth of Jesus Christ was the principal subject of prophecy among God's chosen people for hundreds of years before the event came to pass, and in these prophecies the minute descriptions were given of the place where He should be born, of the manner of His birth and of the times in which He should make His appearance. A Jewish Christian was telling one of his own race of the treasure he had found in Jesus, and was answering questions concerning Christ's miraculous conception and virgin birth. At last, no longer able to face the zeal of the Christian, the unconverted one said, "Then if another should be born of a virgin as this one was, would you believe him also to be the Christ"? But the Christian answered, "Yes, if he were so born." But this was said, of course, with the full knowledge that another could never be the subject of prophecy and of miraculous appearance as Jesus was. Anyone is safe to offer to believe on one who is "so born."

About the manger cradle of the newborn Christ gathered all the joys and hopes of the race of man. But for the fact that Jesus Christ espoused our cause, the human race would no doubt have perished with the sin of Adam. The manger was involved in the first promise of redemption, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" (Genesis 3:15). The manger was involved in the commandment to Noah to build an ark for the saving of his house, and for the replenishment of the new world. The manger was involved in the call of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees, and in the preservation of the family and the nation which sprang from him amidst the lights and shadows of fifteen centuries. The manger was involved in the authenticity of the genealogical tables which connected Adam and Abraham with David, Joseph, Mary and Jesus. In fact the manger was involved in every promise of a Saviour, Deliverer, Prophet, Priest and King which cheered the hearts of God's ancient people and gave them hope for a golden day to come.

But as the manger was fulfillment of the hopes of those who lived in the days that preceded it, it is also the basis for the realities, the most blessed realities, of those who have lived since. Suppose we should wake up some morning to find that there are no Bibles, no church buildings, no Christian homes, no ideals of brotherly love in all the world. We have these things now, and take them for granted. But they are all ours because of the manger birth. But for the manger birth, we should have sorrow, but no joy. We should have death, but no hope of resurrection. We should have sin, but no pardon and cleansing from sin. Surely we should hasten with the shepherds at this Christmas time to the manger crib of our newborn King, and there in joy and gratitude we should bring our offerings of gold and incense and myrrh.

Jesus is described as "God manifested in the flesh," and as the "Word of God." The manner, therefore, has a message of many phases. Let us think of some of those phases today:

1. The manger speaks to us of the faithfulness of God. God had promised to send a Saviour and Deliverer. The fulfillment of that promise was long delayed, and many difficulties had arisen to hinder its fulfillment. In the case of many, "hope long deferred made the heart sick." But God did not forget, and His wisdom and power found a way. After that first promise, there was a flood. Then the post-flood world sank down in the pit of idolatry, the chosen family "went down into Egypt," the chosen nation was dislodged from its promised land, the chosen people of God made captives and scattered among the nations, the faithful keepers of the law became Pharisees, the Roman eagle replaced the lion of Judah on the banners of world power and the hopes of good men descended to low ebb. But suddenly there appeared a heavenly evangel to announce, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

The manger speaks to the troubled in heart today and assures them that God has not forgotten, and that what He has promised He is able also to perform. The mountains may move into the midst of the sea, and the nations of the earth may rise and fall, but God's word is sure, and they are safe who put their trust in Him.

2. The manger speaks of the knowledge of God. Prophecy is just history written in advance, and there are no prophecies so plain, and yet so unlikely of fulfillment as those relating to the birth of Christ. To fulfill the conditions described by the prophecies, all the currents of world trends had to converge upon an insignificant nation, upon a small town in that nation -- upon a stable in that little town -- and upon a poor transient family in that stable. The decree of the Emperor regarding the method of enrollment for taxes must be brought to bear upon these homely subjects. Earnest men from the days of Abraham down longed for the coming of Christ; but the times were not right. The time must wait until the Greeks could make their fine language the language of the world. It must wait until Roman conquests could bring about an era of world peace. It must wait until the scattered Jews could build their synagogues in all the lands whither they were scattered that there might be a nucleus for the gospel in all the world. It must wait until men had exhausted their resources for religion that they might be ready for the real Priest. It must wait until men had drained their genius for politics that they might welcome earth's true King. It must wait for an age of intellectual prominence, since the gospel must go out in word as well as in power. It must wait until means of travel had come to a point of apparent perfection that permitted gospel evangelists to "go everywhere preaching the word." The knowledge of God foresaw this time as coming in the days of Caesar Augustus, and His wisdom awaited that period and chose it for His purpose.

Surely we today can trust to the knowledge and wisdom of the God who could wait two thousand years to order the first Christmas carol, and yet who could bring about that scheduled occurrence without delay -- when the time was fully come. The things we can do and should do we should not postpone, but we should not suppose God has forgotten when He seems to delay. In the midst of the mazes of our lives, God has a plan in us and for us. God is not only master of the telescope and of the stars, He is also master of the microscope and of the molecules. He not only has a plan for the world and for the nations of the world; He has detailed blueprints for your life and mine. The plan is not always apparent. At times it may seem we are about lost in the mazes, but the manger assures us that God is watching from the shadows and that He will bring us out in His own time and in His own better way.

3. The manger brings us a message of the love of God. It is well that the angels shall sing the praises of their Creator, and we may sing that song too. It is well that men of earth shall remember God as their preserver, and in this sentiment we join most heartily, but the manger message is a song of redemption. We may not be sure of all the motives connected with our creation and preservation, but we know that the motive of redemption was pure love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Man's sin brought his ruin and the ruin of man's world. All the penalty for sin was deserved, and there was no claim for pity or just demand for help. It was love that moved God to woo and win His lost and erring child. Jesus told the story in the Parable of the Vineyard (Luke 20:9-16). God sent His angels and His prophets, and last of all, He sent His Son. This sending of His Son was the climax of love's reach. "He spared not his Son," in His deep desire to save that which was lost.

Sometimes we turn to the other side and try to ferret out the reason for God's infinite search for man in an analysis of man's dignity and value. But we can never find full justification for the great sacrifice there, for however precious we may discern immortal man to be, the necessity of his standing over against the infinite Christ makes him pale into insignificance, and we must again take refuge in the simple, and yet ample, explanation that God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son.

Poets have tried to describe the love of God in terms of the high heavens and the deep, deep sea. They have employed all men of earth as scribes, all stalks of earth as quills, the far-reaching sky as a scroll and the ocean as an inkwell, and yet at the conclusion they have backed away to say, "Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky." There is only one place where there is adequate expression of the love wherewith God loved and does now love us, and that is in the gift of His Son for our redemption. This gift makes all other gifts but shadows, for in this gift all other gifts are included.

4. The message of the manger is a message of salvation. On the eve of His birth the angel said, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The message of salvation is:

a) A message of forgiveness of sins. The sense of guilt is universal among men who have reached the age of responsibility. Wherever men attempt to pray, their sins and iniquities separate them from God, and they draw back with the conviction that their prayers are not acceptable. The heathen attempt to appease their gods with gifts and sacrifices, and men everywhere offer their good works in atonement for their evil hearts of doubt and disobedience.

But the Christians of the world, in one of the sentences of the Apostles' Creed, say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Now sin is against God only. Sin against men is distinguished in being called crime, and if we believe in the forgiveness of sins, we believe that God forgives sins. Such a statement means little unless we mean by it, "I believe God has forgiven my sins." How can anyone come to such a faith as this? Why, he comes to it because he has confidence in the message of the manger. Jesus came expressly to save His people from their sins. The manger

message does not bring consolation to those who continue in their sins, for it does not promise to save in sin. It expressly promises to save from sin. The manger message promises that those who quit their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall find mercy and pardon. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

How continuously irritating and tormenting is the sense of guilt! But how blessed and assuring is the sense of pardon that comes to the truly penitent through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ! And this is not to be just the recollection of a crisis once reached and passed. It is to be a continuous assurance. Not only the sins committed before conversion and baptism, but all the sins of the past, right up to the present hour are to be forgiven. Let none of us tarry under the burden of sin. Come today in genuine contrition and faith and let Jesus Christ make the slate clean right up to this very hour. The devil is the accuser of the brethren and delights in tormenting good people with the charge that their conversion is made invalid by their more recent sins. Let us not argue the case with him. Let us come today, this Christmas Day, and trust for such a supplemental pardon as shall make us clear of guilt from the first of our responsible days to this glad hour.

b) The message of the manger is a message of regeneration and of new life. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). That is a fine sentiment in the Christmas carol which asks that Christ be born in our hearts. This is the spiritual counterpart of the Bethlehem birth. It is not enough that we should go up to Bethlehem and glory in the wonderful birth that took place there. Christ must now be formed in our hearts the hope of glory.

If we are unable to fully understand the mystery of the new life of God within the heart, let this be no deterrent to faith in its reality. All life is a mystery. Those who work in physical laboratories never find the germ of life. They know life by its manifestations, just as Jesus said we may know the spiritual life. "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" (John 3:8).

To the candid observer there is no better evidence of the reality of the Christian experience than that of the changed lives of those who profess that experience. This outward change in conduct is not the life itself; but it is, like the sound of the wind, evidence of the life within. The world of doubt and infidelity can furnish no such examples of changed lives as Christianity shows in its John Newtons, Jerry McAuleys and Bud Robinsons. In such men one cannot actually see the new life, but he can see its effects in the altered conversation and conduct, and he has every reason to believe that the causes of the changes are what the men themselves claim they are.

But for us individually the new life is subjective. "I know He lives for He lives within my heart." This is the testimony of one who has passed from death unto life and has the witness of the Holy Spirit that the work is done. The Holy Spirit bears witness with the human spirit, bringing what for want of a better name, we call "feeling." That word feeling has been debased by its having been interpreted as emotionalism -- extreme emotionalism -- but this is no fault of the word itself, and it is no good reason for us to abandon it while waiting for a term that bears no objectionable feature. We do "feel" the stirrings of the new life within. There is a witness that is

dependable. Real born again people are justified in saying, "I know I have the new life within me," and, being a born again Christian myself, I do acclaim the glad news that I know the new life of God is in my heart today. To God be all the praise and glory!

c) The message of the manger is a message of cleansing from all outward and inward sin. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the work of the devil" (I John 3:8). The sins which we have committed, which bring guilt to our consciences and for which we must seek forgiveness are our own works. But back of our sinful works is a sinful nature which we have because we are members of a fallen race. This sinful nature is not a deed; it is a state. It is not our work; it is the work of the devil. It cannot be pardoned; it must be cleansed. The condition for its removal by divine grace is not repentance, but committal. Still the message of the manger covers this deep-seated need, for the Son of God was manifested to do this very thing. The message of the manger is a message of full salvation.

Sometimes those who hold that Jesus Christ can and will deliver from all outward and inward sin are called extremists. If the name is applicable, it is not altogether a slander, for such extremists are extremists for Christ, and that is much more complimentary than being extremists for the devil and sin. Perhaps there is no escape from being an extremist, for either Christ can and will save from all sin or else He cannot or will not do so. In choosing either of these propositions one stands forth as either an extremist for holiness or an extremist for sin.

But let there be no rounding of the corners. The message of the manger is a message of full deliverance. Jesus came to save His people from their sins and to destroy the works of the devil out of our hearts, and He can and will do that which He came to do. There is full salvation in Christ. There is no sin so dark but that Jesus Christ can and will save from its guilt and power. There is no defilement so clinging but that Jesus Christ can cleanse it away and make our hearts whiter than snow.

In many lands snow has a special meaning at Christmas. Those who have lived in such lands, even though transported to the tropics, still sing of a "White Christmas." Let us sing today of a white Christmas by trusting Christ to cleanse away all the dross and defilement from our hearts that there may be nothing left in them that is contrary to His will and nature. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). "Whiter than snow, yes whiter than snow. Now wash me and I shall be whiter than snow."

d) The message of the manger is a message promising divine fullness. There never was and never will be another incarnation, but there is for all God's children a Spirit-filled life. The incoming and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human heart is in the nature of the "Heart of the Gospel." The history of our holy religion is true and wonderful. The doctrines of our holy religion commend themselves to the intelligence of men. Christian ethical standards are the highest known in the world. The sacraments of the Christian religion are simple and beautiful beyond all comparison. But the real heart of Christianity is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer's heart. He dwells within to cleanse and keep. He dwells within to comfort and guide. He dwells within to uplift and enable.

The echo of the announcement, "Christ is born," is that joyful word, "The Comforter has come." Jesus offered as a test to those who claimed to love Him the requirement that they keep His commandments. We are all glad for the Christmas season, and if pressed, we would, I think, all claim that we love Jesus. Well, His pressing commandment was that His people should not depart from Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high. Now there is no better way for us to attest the love we have for Christ than by our insisting on that divine intimacy that comes only to those who "walk in the Spirit."

e) The message of the manger is a message of peace and good will toward men. Perhaps the announcement meant that God offers peace and good will to men, and let us glory in that phase of the message this morning. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7). "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23).

But let us also come to the subject of peace and good will as it bears upon us as followers of the Prince of Peace at this blessed Christmastide. The basis of true Christian peace and good will is love in the heart. Christ commands His people to love one another, and it is promised that the manifestation of this love shall be evidence to "all men" that these are His disciples. Sometimes people draw back a little from the suggestion that we are to love God's people more than we love others. But love is adapted to its objects. We are to love God only with the supreme love of worship. We are to love our fellow Christians with the love of trusting, confident fellowship. We are to love all men with the love which honors the good in them and pities the evil in them. But all this love is the love upon which peace and good will can rest. It is a love which doeth no ill to our neighbors, and which prays for their highest good always.

Apart from our relation and standing with God, nothing is worthy of such concern with us as our relationship with our fellow men. The world of inanimate nature beneath us may be but an empire of indifference with us, but the world of mankind should be of great concern. Booker T. Washington declared he would not permit any man to so drag him down as to make him hate him. We perhaps may be able to put this saying into positive form and declare we will love men for whom Christ died, no matter what their treatment of us may be.

f) Finally, this salvation message from the manger is a message of hope for final victory and glory. Jesus, as the Son of God, came down very low in the valley when He became flesh and dwelt among us, but the promise is that He shall come again in glory and in power. He was rich in heaven, but for our sake He became poor by coming down to the earthly estate. His very humiliation is prophecy of His coming glory. He is coming back to this world in which He was once a stranger. When He comes the second time He will come as universal King and Lord. We who love Him rejoice in the prospect of His high exaltation.

Connected with the hope of His second coming is the hope that with that coming all things will become new. At that time the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more. Through the Babe of Bethlehem this earth of ours is to become a place of peace and safety. The lion shall eat straw like the ox, the wolf and the lamb

shall become fast friends, a little child shall play about the den of the cockatrice without danger, and nothing shall hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. Hail that blessed day!

Once more we have gathered about the manger crib of our incarnate Lord at Christmastide, and from that manger we have heard a voice that speaketh louder than words, "Let us give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Hebrews 2:1).

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### 3 -- THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Romans 1:16).

The term "gospel" includes within its scope all the essentials of that revelation that are given to us in the Bible and in Christ. It includes the facts of the life and death of Jesus, and of His resurrection from the dead and ascent into heaven. It includes the doctrines of grace as related to the salvation and destiny of men. It involves the power of God extended by the ministry of the Holy Spirit in conviction for sin, regeneration of the heart and sanctification of the nature. In substance our text says, "I am not ashamed of Christianity for it does for men what they need to have done in the interest of their present well-being and their future destiny."

First, the text is just the personal testimony of Paul. Here is a man who, according to the calculations of men, paid a great price to become a Christian. He was of proud pedigree, of high social and religious reputation, and of honorable occupation. He had about all one could have in the way of advantage and honor, and was, withal, blessed with a good conscience, feeling that his zeal for the religion of his fathers was fully justified. But on his way to Damascus he met Jesus Christ, and immediately all the things which he might have counted gain, he immediately transferred to the other side of the ledger and counted them loss that he might win Christ. He was not reluctant to pay the price, but made his decision immediately and set forth on his new course with the zeal of his former life purified and increased.

As a young convert, Paul set about telling others of his great find. He brooked the persecution which his course stirred up, and found grace and courage to face all opposition without faltering. His testimony was direct and unequivocal. He told when and where he met Christ, what the Master said and did, what his own response was, and what his considered purpose relating to the future was.

Being a man of intellectual honesty, he found it necessary to get aside to think things through. He was wise in that he took Christ immediately by faith and received Him into his heart, and then in the joy and assurance of his new-found love, set about to make his intellectual adjustments. Some, with less wisdom, have waited to receive Christ until they could work out their problems, and in so waiting they have become hard faster than they became wise, and so have lived and died without knowing the joys of sins forgiven, and possessing the bliss the blood-washed know. In the isolation of the deserts of Arabia, Paul the Christian Jew spent three

years working out the faith of his fathers in relation to his new-found knowledge of Christ. At the end he came out to confer with the apostles at Jerusalem, and to discover to his immense joy that what he had received "by revelation" was in exact agreement with what the apostles, who had been with Jesus from the days of the preaching of John, had learned and taught.

Being a man of practical sincerity, Paul could not join the legalists in requiring circumcision of Gentile Christians or in making any sacrament of the Jews or of the Christians a saving ordinance. He would circumcise Timothy that he might not offend the unconverted Jews of that part, and he would baptize a few converts when there was no helper to attend to this sacrament, but he would count only the circumcision of the heart as essential, and the baptism with the Holy Ghost as the full symbol of the new dispensation of grace. He utterly refused to be brought into bondage to holy days and new moons or to allow menus or shibboleths to substitute a holy heart and a truly righteous life.

Equipped with this panoply, Paul set forth as an apostle of Christ to put his doctrines and his life to every form of test. This he did of both choice and necessity. Feeling it was woe if he did not preach, he determined to do what would otherwise become a duty before it had time to become such, and while it yet remained in the sphere of privilege. In going forth thus willingly, he was unable to avoid the tests incidental to such a course. He had to compare what he had with what others held, and in all sincerity, he had to face the results, be they encouraging or otherwise.

When Paul set forth to preach, and until the end of his earthly day, Judaism was in bloom. The temple at Jerusalem was still standing, and here the Levites sang and the priests -- robed sons of Aaron -- ministered at the altar. Every morning and every evening the people knelt on their housetops to pray while the black smoke of the rekindled fire of the burnt offering and the white smoke of the incense offering ascended toward heaven. There were beauty and splendor in the ritual, and there was pity in the hearts of the worshipers there for all who could not class themselves as sons of Abraham. Paul knew what this pride of race and religion meant, and he had to come with his simple gospel of Christ and make comparisons. Christians had no edifices. The ritual was short and unimpressive. On the point of form and appearance, the Jews were ahead, but Paul looked on into the inner power, and found that the gospel would do for men a more fundamental thing than the finest ritual in the world. The religion of the Jews could give appearance and polish, but the gospel of Christ would make bad men good, transform sinners into saints, and make the chief of sinners an apostle of Christ. The religion of the Jews affected but the outside, the gospel of Christ made "all things new" by making the heart new, so being enamored of reality, Paul could stand there within the confines of the sacred temple and say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" in comparison with the religion of the Jews; for the religion of the Jews deals with the outside and is confined to the Jew, while the gospel of Christ reaches the depths of the heart and is applicable to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

In the course of time Paul went with the gospel message to Ephesus, where stood the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The huge and beautiful edifice housed a little black image of Diana which was said to have fallen down from Jupiter. Silversmiths made fortunes molding and selling facsimiles of that original image; a thousand priestesses ministered at the altar, and all the world knew that Ephesus worshipped Diana. Shut up within their narrow provincialism, the dwellers at Ephesus felt themselves superior to others, and

developed an arrogant pride with reference to all other religions. To the shadow of that marvelous temple came Paul the Christian to preach the incarnation, matching the story of Diana with the message of Bethlehem's manger, and placing over against the fanatical idol worship of the Ephesians the fact of the indwelling Christ. He saw men lose their equilibrium over the prospect of a loss of trade, and spend hours in an uproar by which they hoped to drown out all objections and explanations. Paul stood aside and compared with all this the fact that God has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. He stood there and made the comparison, and he said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," for it has a living Christ in the place of the dead images of Ephesus, and it has transforming power where they have only pointless frenzy. Right under the shadow of that great temple Paul had a revival, set in order a Christian church, and remained for months to preach and testify to all the visitors from Asia, as well as to the inhabitants of Ephesus itself, that Christ is peerless, and His gospel without an equal.

From Ephesus Paul passed to Macedonia, in obedience to the direction which came to him in a vision of the night. In Macedonia he came to Philippi, the chief city, which was the center of commercialism, where many were so taken with making money that they had no time for prayer meetings, and turned such matters over to the few women whose hearts stirred them to meet by the water course to seek the favor of God. In Philippi money was mammon, and mammon takes the place which rightly belongs to God. In Philippi a man's importance was judged by his hoard of gold, and his wisdom by his ability to get earthly gain. Paul and Silas walked about the city in search of opportunities. They stopped at the woman's prayer meeting, and by their testimony led the "worker in purple" to the Lord, and thereafter found lodging at her house while they continued their search for souls. At the end of a week their faith reached up for the conversion of the little show girl who amused the crowds by making fun of the Christians. Her conversion led to the scourging and imprisonment of the apostles, but in the jail God gave them grace to sing praises at midnight, and by supernatural means they were loosed from their bands and their prison gates swung wide. At that late hour the jailer and his family were converted, and the Church was founded in money-mad Philippi. Paul, the Christian, stood aside and compared what he had with what Philippi offered, and he affirmed, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" in comparison with the money of Philippi; for this is but the gold which perishes, but Christ gives the true riches that fire cannot destroy, and which we will have later when we need it more and can keep it longer. Christ is better than money, for although money may buy some things we need and want, Christ is all we need and want immediately. The rich are poor if they have not Christ, and the poor are rich when they possess Him in His fullness. The true Christian may boldly say, "Give me Jesus, and you may have all this world."

Paul went to Athens, the intellectual capital of the world. He ascended to the top of Mars' Hill where gathered the disciples of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others of the Greek masters, for the purpose of either hearing or telling something new. These men deified the intellect and accounted speculation the highest occupation of man. Within their group was represented the best the mind of man had ever produced. When they asked Paul, "What is new?" he began at once to preach Christ unto them. He started where the Greeks left off. After lifting an altar to the honor of every known god, conscious that their pantheon was not complete, they lifted yet another and inscribed it to "The Unknown God." This One whom they acknowledged they did not know, Paul declared unto them. Standing there in a city world-famed for intelligence, Paul preached Christ the

power of God and the wisdom of God. Surveying the array of brains before him, Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" for in Him is hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and the greatest wisdom in the world is that which one exercises when he takes into his life the power to live forever. Socrates, in his dying hour, looked toward the West and said to his disciples, "I think I see the golden isles. But, oh, that we had a stouter ship and a stronger hope!" And here Paul stood among the disciples of that great teacher to set before them that stouter ship and stronger hope for which their master prayed. The gospel passed this test also, and from the top of Mars' Hill there came some who found in Christ what philosophy could not give them -- assurance of salvation from sin and a home in heaven.

From Athens Paul went on to Corinth, the pleasure capital of the ancient world. Situated on a narrow peninsula, with beaches near on two sides, Corinth was adapted to the role which she took. Her best known citizens adopted pleasure as their goal. Their motto was, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." They despised conventionalities, and substituted license for liberty. Men let their hair grow long, women cut their hair short, and in both cases the unseemly fashion was a badge of abandonment. It testified to all that they bowed only at the altar of fun. Decency did not count with the Corinthians. To them the bodily senses were all. Into this human slime pit came Paul the Christian to preach Christ. Against their assumed license he set up that liberty which Christ gives wherein a man can do as he chooses and still do right, because his heart has been chastened and changed until he now loves the things that God loves and hates the things that God hates. Against their sensual pleasures he set up the unmixed joy and peace that comes to one whose heart is right. He stood there and compared what he had to offer with what the Corinthians had, and he exclaimed, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" for His joys are lasting and His pleasures are forevermore. And from Corinth came trophies for Christ who were washed and justified and sanctified and devoted to Christ without measure. Christ won in Corinth, and Paul won too, and came away more fully confirmed that there is no situation that Christ cannot master, and no need He cannot fulfill.

And now Paul thinks of going to Rome, the political capital and military center of the world. Here was the golden palace of Caesar, the senate chamber of the Romans, and the home base for the legions before whom all the world quailed and bowed low. To that city where power was the watchword, Paul the Christian was about to come. He was no revolutionist set for the overthrow of the government; but he must match power with power. Rome had power to make and enforce laws. It had power to restrict the wicked actions of bad men. It had power to conquer on the fields of battle. It had power to humble proud cities to the dust. It had power to exalt little men to high places. But here comes Paul with the challenge of a power that will save men from the guilt and power and pollution of sin. He sets this power up in comparison with all the powers that Rome claimed and said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Such power Rome neither had nor claimed to have, so Paul was ahead again, and now he speaks, not as a novice newly harnessed for future battle, but as a warrior who has tried his armor on a thousand battlefields and found no dart sharp enough to pierce it. As "Paul the aged," he speaks as a veteran, and he speaks with the assurance of experience. He speaks as a challenging giant conscious of his strength. He speaks with the authority of one who knows his resources and knows they are ample. The gospel he had preached for thirty years never failed him once. The Christ he declared never let him down. From the eminence of a long and devoted life, now within sight of its final goal post, he shouts, "I am not

ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

But Paul speaks not alone as an individual, but also as a representative Christian. The experience he had on the Damascus road should have its parallel in our lives. And our gospel must meet its tests, even as his met its tests. There is no way to spare either ourselves or the gospel we preach. We are in a very real world. We are in a trial world -- a world of test and probation. Can we pass the tests? Will the gospel we preach make good in the modern world?

First of all, our gospel must stand the personal test. That old motto, "Do as I say, and not as I do," is invalid. We must practice what we preach. We must be partakers of the gospel we preach to others. The true form is, "Jesus can save you, for He has saved me." We must be able to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ," because when it found me a sinner, it transformed me and made me new. It gave to me new life and new power. It brought pardon and peace to my troubled heart. It brought purity and power to my needy soul. It has proved sufficient in trial and test. It has brought to my inner life the strength that answers to the outer demands which come upon me. Philosophy and theory are not enough. There must be witness and testimony. I cannot myself be satisfied with dim hopes. My soul demands assurance. And I thank God that the gospel of Christ has met these inner needs of my unworthy heart, and I can say as I look back upon what I was and the road over which I have come, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" for it is the power of God unto my salvation, having lifted me from the pit of sin and established my feet upon the unmovable rock, and having sustained me until this good hour.

Then the gospel must stand the intellectual test. Reason does not go far enough; though the gospel goes parallel with reason as far as reason is able to go. The world has always been quick to claim the brains of men, but its claim is often as false as it is quick. At the close of the French Revolution the members of the French Academy listed eighty scientific facts which contradicted the Bible, and upon the basis of this array of reasons the scholars rejected the Bible as being untrue. But now in a little over a hundred years, not one of the eighty theses listed is held by any authentic scholar, but more people read and believe the Bible than ever before in the history of the world. Voltaire, the skeptic, prophesied that within a hundred years from the time he was speaking the Bible would be found only as a curiosity in museums and other such places. But before the hundred years were up the very house in which Voltaire uttered his prophecy was used as a depository for Bibles, and the Bible has been translated into more than a thousand languages and dialects and continues to be the "best seller" in every land where it has been introduced.

The persistent inconsistency of unbelievers is difficult to overestimate. Time and again the spade of the archaeologist has driven the skeptic from his place of refuge, and in every instance the claims of the Bible have been substantiated by the findings of those who dig in the ruins of ancient civilizations. The skeptic who will not believe upon the basis of sufficient evidence is fully as unscientific as the credulous Christian who accepts without examining the evidence. Sober thought and established facts are both on the side of the Bible and the Christian's faith. No effort of any skeptic shall ever be sufficient to dislodge the Rock of Ages.

In the old days, Paul said, "The world by wisdom knew not God," and in such words he set forth a timeless truth. It has ever been so. It is true today as in the past. The old Greek teacher, so

they say, sat in the midst of his class of boys, and to awaken their interest, suddenly asked, "Would you not like to know upon what foundation the earth rests?" The boys were instantly clamorous to know this, and the old teacher stated simply, "The earth rests upon the back of a huge turtle." A few days later the keen-minded boys had finished with this bit of knowledge and came to ask, "Upon what does the turtle stand?" Without elaboration, the teacher answered, "The turtle stands upon a rock." Then when the class demanded to know what sustained the rock, the teacher replied, "The rock is in the water." Once more came the question, "What holds up the water?" To this the teacher replied, "We do not know what sustains the water. We cannot know everything. We should be glad to know as much as we do." This story sounds silly now, but yesterday the successor to that old Greek teacher told a class of intelligent boys and girls that man came from the higher animal species, the higher species from the lower, the lower from the insect, the insects from the orders beneath, and all from "the original fire mist." And there he left them suspended. Such wild guessing is as intellectually insufficient as it is spiritually hurtful. In comparison the Genesis account is as day to night; for the Genesis account posits an adequate cause for all we see and know, and that is a thesis which is intellectually sound. Among the intellectuals there is no occasion to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It can pass this test now as in the past. The Bible and the Christian faith are scientifically sound and intellectually dependable.

The gospel must stand the social test. Who are the people who hold to this faith? What are they like in comparison with others? Where can the world find a man of faith to match Abraham? Where can it turn for a man of prayer like Samuel or Daniel? Where can it find patience like that of Job? Where can it find a logician and theologian like Paul? Where can it find saints like Knox, Fox, Calvin, Luther, and Wesley? Where can it show homes to match Christian homes, civilizations to compare with Christian civilization, and lives to compare on the average with the lives of Christians? There is no occasion to be ashamed here. God's people are the best people in the world, and when allowance is made for all their shortcomings, it is still a fact that nobody lives so well as God's people and nobody dies so content. Even Balaam, the greedy prophet, had to say, "Let me live the life of the righteous and let my last end be like his." The Christian life is the good life, and the Christian death is triumphant.

The gospel must stand the practical test. After all, a machine must do what it is made to do before it can be dubbed a success. It may be beautiful in design. It may be shiny in appearance. It may be costly in construction, but if it will not do what it was made to do it is a failure. And it is like that with the gospel. It was designed to bring salvation to sinners, holiness to believers, victory to troubled saints, triumph in the dying hour, and a home in heaven when all is over. Salvation in its unlimited sense involves all this. Pardon is initial salvation; purity is full salvation; paradise is final salvation. Can the gospel be trusted to bring all these? Yes, thank God, it can, and there is no occasion to be ashamed here.

A noted Hindu in India was brought to Christ. In the church on Sunday morning he gave his testimony, which was in effect as follows: "I found many good things in the religion of my fathers, but I found in Christ something that I never could find there, and that was inner assurance of acceptance with God and power to live the life I knew I should live. It is this positive life and inner power that differentiates the Christian religion from all other religions in the world."

The gospel must meet the demands of experience. It must bring one to know he is right with God and that the Holy Spirit abides within him. It must bring peace and contentment and assurance beyond a doubt. It must satisfy the soul to the point where one can be independent of environment. One cannot always be well or wealthy or popular simply by choosing to be so. These things come partly as rewards of certain modes of living, and partly by the providence of God without much respect to volition, but the gospel must enable us to be content in whatsoever state we are. It must make our beds in sickness; it must reward us with something more valuable than money; it must console us when friends leave us; it must make us complete when everything besides is lacking; it must bring us to where we can say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." It must be so complete as to require no supplement. It must be so full as to make useless all measures. It must be timeless like eternity. Its peace must be deep like the ocean. Its joy must be active and exhaustless like a river. Its righteousness must be adapted to everyday life. Its assurance must be a staunch bridge across the river of death to land us in the city of God. Is the gospel this? all of this? Yes, thank God, all of this, and more. By it more than one has come to the end of the way to shout back to those who follow on, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time for me to lift anchor and go across to the harbor on the other side of the sea has come. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; 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." I want my last testimony to be like that. I am living every day with that hope set before me. I plan deliberately to lift the anchor pretty soon and cross the sea to the haven on the other side. In life I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it has led me to the source of power which has transformed me and sustained me. In death I shall not look back -- my treasures are in the sky. In heaven I shall still rejoice that I have not believed in vain, neither labored in vain. In this faith and in this assurance I stand fast today, and I join Paul in declaring that I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Thank God for the honor of being a Christian. In this I have been the gainer from the beginning. Today, after years in His service, I disavow any claim upon Him for reward. He has abundantly rewarded all along the way. The end of each day finds me still deeper in debt to Him. His bounty overmatches my devotion. May God give me grace and wisdom to love Him more and serve Him better until the perfect day shall dawn!

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#### 4 -- CHRIST'S UNFAILING GENTLENESS AND POWER

Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust (Matthew 12:18-21).

This text appears first in the opening verses of the forty-second chapter of Isaiah, and is quoted by Matthew to show how fitly it was fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Aside from this quotation, practically the whole of the twelfth chapter of Matthew is taken up with the record of opposition to Jesus and to persecution on the part of His enemies. The text has therefore been called "a beautiful picture on a dark background."

The chapter begins with the record of Jesus and His disciples passing through the barley fields on the Sabbath day, and, following the custom and the law, they plucked a few heads of grain and shelled them out to meet their need for food, but, so intent were His enemies on finding fault, that they accused Jesus and His followers of breaking the Sabbath, and tried to injure His influence for good by spreading this report abroad. This opposition was the more irritating because it was so petty, yet Jesus answered them never a word.

Then the story seems to pass to the next Sabbath, and records the instance of Jesus' healing the man with the withered arm. There in the presence of the multitude Jesus called the man to stand up and stretch forth his arm. Immediately his arm was whole as the other, and the people marveled. The enemies of Christ, however, were by no means reconciled by this good work, but were filled with settled malice, and sought counsel as to how they might destroy Him.

Another week passes, and we come to the record of Jesus' casting out a devil. This was the highest type of work Jesus did while on earth, and its evident accomplishment in the sight of the people made explanation by the Pharisees inescapable. In their straits these wretched men said, "He is in league with Beelzebub, the prince of evil spirits, and makes a show of casting out lesser spirits that He may the more effectively deceive the people and lead them astray." Just as the casting out of evil spirits represented the highest form of work for the Master, it gave rise to the deepest sin on the part of His opposers. Crediting the work of God as the work of the devil is approaching blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and of this Jesus gave them solemn warning, explaining to them that such a sin has no pardon. If one stops to think for just a moment he will see how this conclusion follows; for if one sets himself to credit God's work to the devil, then the more God deals with him the farther away he will be driven, since he will believe and say that all he hears and feels is the work of the enemy. "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."

Then the persecutors came, and in derision said, "Master, show us a sign from heaven." Thus they would set aside all the mighty works which He had done as of no consequence, and say, "Make the heavens dark above us. Or cause a new star to appear. Or bring on a storm. Or cause writing to appear in the sky." Thus was revealed the willful hardening on the part of these enemies, and their determination not to be convinced.

The climax of it all came when the mother and brethren of our Lord joined in with the persecutors and came after Him to take Him away. Word was sent to the front, "Thy mother and thy brethren stand without seeking thee." The words sound innocent enough when spoken in just that way, but in the parallel reading in Mark we are made to see that what was really implied, and that so openly that all hearers understood, was that His mother and his brethren thought Him crazy and beside Himself and had come to take Him home, accounting Him incompetent to either teach or take care of Himself. To charge Him as being a madman was to bring Him into disrepute, and this must have been the hardest trial of all to the gentle, loving Son of God.

In every instance Jesus refused to be irritated or to be led into useless caviling and argument. This was the meaning of the words of the prophet. There is no reference to street and open air preaching, we know, for in this blessed exercise few have exceeded the Son of God. He

answered the objections to the barley field occurrence by citing from the Scriptures the instance in which David, whom His persecutors professed to revere, had transgressed the usual standards of conduct in the interest of the higher laws of life, and sought to show them that God deals in mercy and not in legal severity, and that the Sabbath and all the institutions of God and men were made for men, and not men made for them. When latent malice broke out into open threats over His healing of the man with the withered arm, He silently withdrew from the vicinity and patiently continued His works of mercy and His preaching of the gospel of salvation. When men made the most terrible accusation against Him in saying He was in league with the devil, He defended Himself with irrefutable logic in showing that a house divided against itself cannot stand, but He spoke His words in gentleness and temperance. "If Satan cast out Satan," said the Great Teacher, "then his kingdom will fall." And for this the people should rejoice. Instead of complaining that an unseemly thing is occurring, they should all join in gladness that the end of evil is in sight. The demand for a sign from heaven was met by a reference to the miracle of miracles yet to occur -- His own resurrection from the dead. The bitter words of His own relatives was answered by waving His hand to indicate His followers, and by words which indicated that the closest relationships are based upon spiritual kinship, and not on mere earthly blood ties.

The Son of God came through all opposition unruffled and unoffended. And He proved Himself the heir to the Messianic prophecy recorded in the text, "He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust."

The language here is highly metaphorical, but was plain to those to whom it was addressed. The bruised reed was a reference to nature beneath. The smoking flax was a reference to a familiar housekeeper's situation. Jesus was a keen observer of nature and of the habits of the people among whom He moved. "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests," said He on another occasion, and then set this over against His own earthly homelessness and comparative friendlessness. "Behold the sower," He invited, and then went on to preach of the sowing of the Word of God, and to estimate the harvest which truth produces in the good soil of a willing and obedient heart. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." And then followed His great lesson on trust in God, for He continued, "If God so clothe the grass which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" He spoke of the Father's notice of the falling sparrow, but only in order to set forth God's specific care of His children, even to the hairs of their heads.

Jesus observed, nature, but He worshipped God only. The worship of nature has ever been the substitute for spiritual life and reverence of the personal God. An admirer once claimed that Robert E. Ingersoll, the "free thinker," was the best man of his day. In proof of this he cited Ingersoll's regard for nature. He was careful when out for a walk to avoid, as far as possible, the crushing of a worm or insect. In his room he would not even kill a fly that tormented him, saying the fly had a right to live and to live its own way. This man, however, had no scruples against taking away the chart and compass from the little child about to set sail upon the sea of life. He possessed no conscience in the matter of removing the principal bulwarks from men during the years of temptation and exposing them to the ravages of sin and abandoning them to the fires of

fleshly passions. He would even stoop to dig away the crumbling earth beneath the feet of the aged and gray, taking away their hope for the life to come and compelling them to plunge into the gulf of despair while dying without God. I cannot crown one as a "good man" who thus disregards his fellow men, no matter what interest he may show toward nature beneath him.

We cannot believe that Jesus spent His time lifting up and repairing bruised reeds along the banks of the Jordan River, although the metaphor suggests such an occupation. Jesus was interested in men, and the bruised reed stands for a certain class and type of men.

The reed in its usual state was typical of proud, impenitent men. Its trunk was thin and its strength was small, so that it swayed even in the gentle breeze, but it was unaware of its limitations and relative helplessness. It held its head high, away up among the cedars and the firs, and seemed to say to passers-by, "Look at me. I am about as good as anybody."

Once the reed became bent at right angles and bruised in the process it was unable to recover itself. It was certain to perish unless some outside hand came to its aid to correct and sustain it until it could recover its poise and strength again. With its head bowed low, and its confession of helplessness, the bruised reed became a type of the penitent sinner who beats upon his breast, and cries, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

The reed was never very valuable, but it was not aware of it until it became bruised. In its best state one would not think of bestowing much time or care upon it. But when it became bruised -- who would stop to straighten and bind it up? For the most part, men would pass it by, or carelessly stoop to break it completely. That is the way worldly men look at confessed sinners. They accept the sinner's own estimate of himself, and let it go at that. They may honor the proud, unbent reed, but they will break the useless, bruised reed. It is not so with Jesus. He stopped a whole procession to listen to the plea of the blind beggar by the side of the Jericho road. He turned from the lofty conversation of Simon the Pharisee to pardon the sins of a poor woman from the streets who stooped to wash His feet with her tears and dry them with her hair. He encouraged the poor to gather about Him. He laid His hand in blessing upon the children of tired and discouraged mothers. The poor leper, whom others would not allow to approach, He touched with the hand of gentleness and cleansed with the word of His power. A poor foreign woman whose daughter was possessed with devils, and who herself accepted a place with the dogs under the table, could get His ear and move His healing hand. Even when a need was so great that it made a petitioner mute, Jesus would read the appeal in the anxious look and would answer the call, no matter how heavy the draft.

Jesus is like that today. No one is ever turned away who kneels at Jesus' feet. Poverty, ignorance, sin and shame are not impossible barriers to the penitent soul who would come into the Master's presence. A humble and contrite heart He will not despise. "All the fitness Christ requireth is to feel your need of Him." John Newton, Jerry MacAuley, Nellie Conroy, Gipsy Smith, Bud Robinson, the Japanese "gentleman in prison," what a motley crowd they were when they came to Jesus! Successors they were to such other bruised reeds as Mary of Magdala, David the murderer, and the thief on the cross. People whom no one else will have, Jesus will take. And He does not take them into doubtful disputation, but accepts them as His own. He does not leave them bent and bruised, but lifts them up, binds up their wounds, and gives them life and hope anew. He

"sends forth judgment unto victory." Judgment is usually the precursor of punishment. But Jesus makes it the precursor of victory. Conviction for sin leads to forgiveness of sins. Judgment leads to pardon. Confession presages testimony. In the presence of Christ the way up is down. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Once when I invited a man to come to Christ, he said, "It's no use. You do not know how wicked I have been. Christ will not take me." I answered him thus, "Well, I want you to come any way, for either you are mistaken, and Christ will take you, or else you will be the most famous man in history. A million years from now the angels will still be pointing you out and saying, 'There he is. The first man Jesus would not take. Until he came, Jesus took all who came, but when this man came, the Master refused him.'" The man came, but he will not be famous for the cause I suggested, for Jesus took him, and there yet remains to be found one whom He will not take. "A bruised reed he will not break" -- so tender is He -- "till he send forth judgment unto victory" -- so mighty is He.

Now we come to the claim that He will not "quench smoking flax . . . till he send forth judgment unto victory." Just as Jesus was not primarily interested in the things of nature, but saw men and the needs of men in the things of nature, so He is not primarily interested in the details of housekeeping, although He did notice these insignificant things. He spoke of the leaven which the woman hid in three measures of meal in the process of breadmaking. He spoke of the woman who lost the coin from her dowry, but His concern was for the kingdom of heaven and for the lost soul of whom the lost coin was but a type. Here attention is drawn to the little earthen vessel or the shell of a gourd which is filled with vegetable oil or animal fat, and supplied with a flaxen wick and used as a means of lighting the house. When the oil supply was exhausted, the flame fed for a time upon the wick and then gave way to smoke and unpleasant odor filled all the house. Under such conditions the usual custom was for the housekeeper to quench the coal entirely, and start anew with a new oil supply and with a freshened wick. There was yet the possibility of replenishing the oil supply and then blowing with gentle breath upon the latent coal until the flame was kindled again.

Fire is a type of life, even of divine life. Then the smoking flax stands for the weak and faltering believer, for the slipping disciple and the soul that has not yet "gone on to perfection." There are multitudes of such souls everywhere. They are a grief to pastors and the anxiety of fellow Christians. The temptation is just to "drop their names," and account them not worth saving. But Jesus would not do it. He would pour in new oil, blow gently upon the latent spark, and get the flame of testimony going again.

We often get greatly agitated about abstract causes. But Jesus was exercised over individual souls. Sometimes we become so concerned in saving the cause that we are like to damn souls to do it. But Jesus saved souls, even when He seemed to imperil the cause to do it. He ate with publicans and sinners that He might lead them to the right. He allowed a sinful woman to approach Him and to wash His feet. He called a tax-gatherer from his perch in a tree and became guest in his house. Finally, He gave His life to save that of Barabbas the robber.

When we see a young Christian whose testimony is more smoke than flame, we are inclined to say, "Well, I guess he did not really get through." If one who did follow the Master stumbles or hesitates, we are likely to say, "Take his name off the book." But Jesus would not do

it. He had patience with Peter's weakness, with Thomas' doubts, with John's and James' pride and self-seeking and with the shallow thinking of all His band. He would not quench the smoking flax of the weakest prayer. He did not blow on the smoldering spark with cyclonic breath, but in gentleness and mercy He breathed upon the weak and struggling until new fire was kindled. He snuffs off the ashes of neglect, blows upon the latent, smoldering love, and pours in the oil of His own free spirit until the weak soul becomes strong, and the spirit of triumph replaces the spirit of discouragement.

The work of Christ is not negative only; for He sends forth "judgment unto victory." Judgment is usually a hard word, for usually it expresses threatened consequences of our own shortcomings. But in this case it is a blessed and precious word, for it tells of God's taking up the cause of the poor and needy and scattering the enemies that threaten his destruction. It is not judgment coming upon us, but judgment exercised in our behalf. The Psalms, the hymn book of the Old Testament Church, is almost a dictionary of military terms, for David was a man of war and his vocabulary included almost everything used in armed conflict. In his hymns of praise he described God by use of words involving the most dreadful military appurtenances. God is to him a fortress. A fortress is a vicious thing if you are on the outside trying to get in, but David was on the inside, and the fortress kept others from getting in. To David a fortress was a thing of joy; to David God was a shield, a buckler, and a warrior who could not be defeated. Because God was on his side, David rejoiced that He was so strong and unconquerable. And it is thus with the promise of judgment in the text before us. This judgment leads to victory. God will judge the foes of the man who puts his trust in Him. He will judge the sins of the man who believes on His name. He will espouse the cause of the soul who sets out to follow Him. He will break the power of canceled sin and set the captive spirit free. He will protect and defend the cause of everyone who identifies himself with Him. He will turn defeat into victory and bring out "more than conqueror every soul that is steadfast unto the end.

The climax of all is reached in the final statement, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust." There is a gradation leading to a climax in the promises relating to Messiah. When God's ancient people were peeled and scattered, the faith of inspired seers arose above the confusion and described the wisdom and strength of the Coming One who would gather the people of Israel near and far and save them with an outstretched arm. All the true sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were bidden to rejoice in the prospect of a deliverance that would surpass in glory their fondest hopes. So mighty was the faith of these seers of visions" that they believed God would regard the blood of the patriarchs in so full a manner that even the Samaritans in whose veins but a few drops of the precious fluid courses could yet be saved. "The land of Zabulon and the land of Naphthalim [Samaria of the days of Jesus], by the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Isaiah 9:1, 2). It was with the supreme reach of confidence that one finally pushed clear up above the clouds, and triumphantly announced as a climax, "And in his name shall the Gentiles trust." This was a declaration of the all sufficiency of the royal blood of Jesus Christ the Saviour. Men without pedigree can come -- He will furnish the blood Himself. Men without anyone to recommend and without anything to commend can come, saying, "In my hand no price I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." Every sin of every man is covered, every want is met, every power of evil is broken and defeated, every privilege of the gospel is opened up for every man. "In his name shall the Gentiles trust." This is saying that none are so bad, but that Jesus will forgive;

none are so polluted but that His blood will wash them and make them white. We are called upon to disregard every hindrance and forget every disqualification, and shout out to all, "Whosoever will, let him come!"

It is to the glory of Christ and His blessed gospel that He does not call the good only, but that He challenges the worst to come. No matter how far away and how wicked and sinful one may be, if he will turn quickly and start to Christ, by the time he reaches Christ he will be all right. He may start as one unfit for the company of decent men, but by the time he arrives he will be good company for the angels.

When Jesus Christ was on earth He exercised an unlimited healing ministry. Halt, blind, lame, deaf, leprous, palsied -- "He healed them all." Even the dead He brought back to life again. Today His sphere of operation is more distinctly the spiritual, although He does heal the body in answer to the prayer of faith. In this spiritual sphere He is as limitless as He used to be in the physical. He does not specialize on certain types and kinds of sinners -- He saves them all.

And what more can we say? It is a wonderful heritage to be the child of Christian parents and to have the advantages of early Christian training. If you have had these favors, be thankful and make the most of your good start. If you have been converted early in life, remember you have yet been saved from the grossest sins, for the chances are you would have fallen into them, but for the grace of God. But if you had no praying mother, remember still you have an intercessor at God's right hand who does not forget to bear your name there. If you were denied a father to advise, do not forget there is One who knows and cares. If you have drifted so far away that it seems an eternity would not suffice for you to come back over the infinite space that separates you from God and a holy life, remember it is only half as far to God as it seems to be, for the moment you start toward Him, He also starts toward you, and as the father met the prodigal down the road, so God will meet you, if you come as a penitent sinner. If you have been a habitual backslider until you have been dubbed "a chronic seeker," so that few are able any more to hold hope for your establishment, do not despair. Christ is merciful. If your voice in prayer sounds to you like the voice of a lone lamb off on the mountainside, remember it is a good Shepherd that seeks you, and that He will find you there and bear you to the fold upon His shoulder. If your prayer is so weak that you fear the sound of your own audible voice, still do not give up. You may be but a bruised reed. Even so, Christ will not break you. Your spiritual life may be but a smoking flax. Even so, Christ will not quench your weak efforts. You may have no blood or training of which to boast. Still take courage, for the unpedigreed Gentiles find grace and deliverance in Him.

Jesus Christ is a Saviour of unfailing gentleness and mercy; but He is also of unfailing virtue and power. His blood can make the vilest clean. His Spirit can purge the deepest pollution of sin. His power can transform the most unlikely. "O everybody come! Come to the Saviour, come!"

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For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come (I Timothy 4:8).

Every man must think of his life as capital to be invested. Or, to use Bible imagery, he must think of his life as talent to be used. In the process of use, one's talent will bring increase or else in the end he will lose even the capital itself. It was like that with the steward who received a talent and went and hid it in the earth. And so the idea of losing and gaining must enter into every man's mind whenever he asks himself the question, "What kind of a life shall I live?"

In reality there are just two kinds of lives: one is the Christian life and the other is the life without Christ. The term "bodily exercise" stands for all that anyone can have and leave Christ out, and the other word, "godliness," stands for what one will have who gives his heart to God and becomes a faithful Christian.

We have therefore really just two propositions before us, namely:

1. Bodily exercise, or the life with Christ left out, profits little.
2. The Christian life is the good life both here and in the world to come.

Suppose we go out tonight and ask, "What is the good thing in life?" Well, we shall receive many answers to such a question. I go to the worldling and ask, "What is the good thing in life?" and he answers me, "Pleasure is the good thing. There is nothing better than that one should eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall all perish anyway. But this man's conclusions are wrong, and they are wrong because his premises are wrong. We shall not all utterly perish tomorrow. We were all made in the image of God and we shall exist somewhere forevermore. Tomorrow we shall be either happier or else more sorrowful than we are today, depending upon the choices we make today and the manner in which we live between now and tomorrow. At any rate, we shall not perish as do the beasts of the earth beneath us, and since we shall live tomorrow, eating and drinking and being merry is not the highest good for .today. In fact, pleasure becomes pain when we pursue it as a thing within itself or pursue it too far even on legitimate lines. Nothing is more desolate than the old age of the pleasure lover. He has come to the place where his palate no longer enjoys flavors; he has come to where his eyes can no more feast upon the beauties of nature about him; he has come to where desire has failed him; and, being desolate of inner joy, there is nothing left that is really worth while. Belshazzar, the king of ancient Babylon, is an example of a pleasure seeker who was cut off in the midst of his wine and pleasure, and he died amidst blood and fear and misery.

I go to the miser and ask, "What is the good life?" He answers, "Riches is the good thing in life." But this man is mistaken, because a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses, but in the inner beauty of the mind and soul. Surrounded with all that money can buy, a man may yet be miserable and lonely and cursed with despair. Think of the things money will not buy -- good things like health and friends and peace of mind! Think of the uncertainty of one's ability to keep riches which causes many a rich man to be uneasy by day and by night lest rising prices or falling markets shall take away his holdings. There are more suicides among the rich than among the poor. If riches were the good thing in life, the rich would be happy and would

want to live as long as possible. The founders of one of the earliest millionaire families in America lay dying. He called his lawyer to his bedside and willed away everything he had, even to the house in which he lived. Then he turned to his Christian wife and asked her to sing, "Come ye sinners, poor and needy, weak and wounded, sick and sore; Jesus ready stands to save you, full of mercy, love and power." The consolations of Christ are as available to the poor as to the rich; therefore the good life is not in money.

If I ask the scholar, "What is the good thing in life?" perhaps he will say, as Plato did, that it is speculation -- just thinking. But men have never found God just by pursuing wisdom, and there is no more rest for the mind outside of God's Word than there is rest for man's heart outside of God's love. When Huxley was old, he regretted that he found himself just a machine for gathering facts and classifying them for the use of other men, while he, himself) was discouraged and bitter, void of love, having few friends, and was entirely without appreciation for poetry, music, art or any of the finer things of human existence.

If men say the good of life is labor, then let us remember with Solomon that there is work and labor everywhere; that the water which descends upon the mountains makes its way to the sea and then must go back again in mist and clouds, and that labor does not bring peace and rest either to nature or to the mind and heart of man.

If a man says that ambition, position, is the good thing in life, then let him think of Alexander who died in a drunken debauch at the age of thirty-three, having lost interest in life because there were no more worlds to conquer. A man's ambitions will always keep in the advance of his accomplishments, so that the highest honor can never soothe the spirit.

Turn where you will, seek what you may, there is not much difference between men except that some are Christians and others are not. The rich and the poor will both alike die. Neither the wise nor the ignorant know very much, considering what there is to be known. No man who lives for the days during which his body prevails -- that is, for this world -- can gain very much. "Bodily exercise profiteth little."

But now we come to the high claim that being a Christian brings the best there is for you, both in the present world and in the world which is yet to come. "What!" exclaims one, "do you claim that the Christian life is the best life for here and now? I thought Christianity was to prepare men to die and that it is a burden to be a Christian while you live." Well, there are many who think just that, but they are mistaken. If there were no hell to shun and no heaven to gain in the future, it would even yet pay to live the Christian life right here in this world.

"But," asks one, "what does the Christian have that others do not have?" Well, for one thing, he has peace with God through the forgiveness of his sins through our Lord Jesus Christ. He is aware, as all men are, that he has sinned and forfeited his right to call God his Father and to come into His presence without fear. But he has found by believing in Jesus Christ what no one has ever found anywhere else. He has found forgiveness for all the sins of his past and he can lie down at night with the blessed realization that if he should die during the night he would go to heaven. He can rise up in the morning with the consciousness that God is his Friend, and that wherever he goes he can count on God to bless and guide and protect him. He can take cognizance of his own heart

any time in the day or night, whenever he is awake, and be aware that there is nothing between him and God to mar his peace and to make him afraid. This is a boon that millions have traveled to the ends of the earth to find and have come back disappointed. Many have visited shrines and bathed in holy water and sought to gain merit by doing good deeds, and yet they came away distressed and burdened and uncertain. But the Christian came to God confessing himself a sinner and there before God, either in the public meeting or in his place of private prayer, the place does not matter, he called upon God for mercy and pardon, and he believed that Jesus died to save him and that the blood that Jesus shed was able to make an atonement for his sins that God would accept, and at the end of his prayer he believed that God, for Christ's sake, forgave all his many sins, and God did so, and sent His Holy Spirit to witness to the believing heart that the work was done. Then the new Christian arose from his place of prayer, rejoicing in the knowledge that God had accepted him, blotted out his sins and made him His child. Ever since that blessed hour the Christian has enjoyed peace. Even when there was trouble all about him, the Christian had peace within. Can you tell me of anything that you would not gladly give to have such a peace as this?

In the second place, the Christian has joy that is deeper and more lasting than any joy that can otherwise come to one's heart in this world. Men without God may have fun and pleasure, but these all disappear in times of grief and sadness, bereavement and disappointment. The Christian has a joy that rises like a wellspring above his sorrows and disappointments. The Christian has sorrows and disappointments, just as others do, but he has a joy that rises above them and abides. "Sorrow and weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning." Happiness and pleasure are like the little stream that flows down the hillside when the monsoon is on, but entirely dries up when the dry, hot season comes. The joy that the Christian has is like the well or spring of water which does not fail, but continues to flow in the drought and in the heat. Jesus spoke of this joy to the woman at the well of Samaria, and she said, "Lord, evermore give me this water." Shall not that be the cry of every heart here tonight? Lord, give us the joy and inner bliss that only true Christians know.

Christians have a love, a tender, forgiving love that others do not have. And I am not thinking now of what hate and revenge may do for your enemies. I am thinking of what they do for the person who harbors them. They certainly destroy his peace and eat out the heart of his soul like a canker. If you hate your enemy, hate will poison the bloodstream of your body, injure your health, shorten your life and make you miserable. If you injure your enemy, you must then live out your days in dread of his vengeance. If you slay him, his ghost will haunt you in your dreams and make you a vagabond. The Christian finds grace and love to forgive his enemy; often this turns the enemy into a friend, and always it delivers the Christian from inner dread.

The Christian has hope as no one else in the world has hope. His hope covers all the future, and it is an assuring hope. He believes that even though he dies, he shall live again. He believes that if he does not get reward in this world it will yet come to him in the world to come. He finds assurance in the promises of God and the presence of God's Spirit in his heart that he will live forever in a world where no sorrow can ever come.

In the days of ancient Israel they used to transfer land from one man to another, much as we do today. In addition to giving parchments as deeds, and giving the purchaser possession, it was customary for the seller to take a small urn of earthenware and fill it with soil from the field and

deliver it to the purchaser. This small urn of soil was called the "earnest." That is, it was a sample of the soil and was in substance an assurance that the purchaser should later have the whole field of which this soil was a sample. Moreover, by comparing this urn of soil with the soil of the field, the purchaser had additional proof of the justice of his claim. Well, the Christian has the earnest of heaven in the presence of God's Spirit in his heart now. This Spirit's presence is the immediate cause of the peace and joy and love and hope of which we have spoken and which is the substance of the Christian's heritage, but this earnest which we have now is the proof of the fuller heritage we shall have in heaven.

When Christopher Columbus sailed toward the west over trackless seas, his men became filled with doubts and fears as they sailed on day after day without sighting land. But one day they took from the water at the side of one of their little ships, a tree branch on which there were green leaves and green and ripe fruit. Their doubts were dispelled, and they were assured that land was near. Even though they could not see the land, they were sure it was not far off because they had found its fruits. The Christian is like that about heaven. We have not actually seen that fair land as yet, but we have some of its fruits in the peace and joy and love and hope which fill our hearts and therefore we know the land is near. And, what is more, we have found the preparation for that blessed land. We do not have to change our course to get there. Heaven is at the end of the Christian life, and the Christian life has promise of a home in heaven. The prospects of that blessed land cheer us even now, and every day brings us nearer.

Others speak of death as the close of day; the Christian speaks of it as the day dawn. Others account the grave the end; the Christian accounts the grave but a stage on the blessed journey to heaven and home.

I thank God that I can say I am a Christian tonight, and I am glad also that I can say with Paul, when he spoke before the king, "I would to God that all who hear me this day were not only almost, but altogether such as I am," in that I would you were all true Christians blessed with all that comes to the Christian in this and in the world to come. Let us pray.

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## 7 -- CHRIST THE EVERLASTING CONQUEROR

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine fat? I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come (Isaiah 63:1-4).

One of the most interesting and long continued stories of the Bible gathers about the twin sons of Isaac and Rebecca -- Esau and Jacob. Although the most closely related by blood, they were opposites in type, and contended with each other always. In childhood Esau became the favorite of his father, and Jacob the peculiar joy of his mother. Esau took to the fields to herd and

to hunt; Jacob took to the tent to cook and care for household duties. In appearance Esau was rough and hairy: Jacob was polite and smooth of form. In texture of mind they were just as different as in bodily appearance. Esau was called a "profane" man. The word, they tell us, implies one "having no fence around him." That is, Esau was a man of the world who accepted all comers as friends and intimates, and was indifferent about moral and spiritual standards. Jacob, while not without fault, chose his companions with care, and gave God and family a high place in his plans.

One day, after the boys had reached responsible age, Esau came in from the field worn and hungry. Jacob was ready to sit down to his dinner of herbs. The hungry Esau asked for a share in the meal. Jacob took advantage of his brother's need and bargained with him for the rights and privileges of the firstborn son. When later Jacob took advantage of his father's age and weakness, and obtained from him the blessing intended for Esau, Esau's wrath could scarcely be restrained. The elder brother's threatenings reached Rebecca's ears, and she urged Isaac to send Jacob away to avoid the bloodshed which she foresaw would soon come.

For more than twenty years Jacob was away in the land of his mother's people, matching wits with the bargain-dealing Laban, and gathering for himself a considerable household and large flocks and herds. When at last Jacob's longing for his father's house broke over bounds, he set forth on his return journey. He was half way home when he suddenly bethought himself of Esau, and remembered the ill favor in which he stood when he saw Esau last. Jacob sent messengers to Esau in Mount Seir, and the answer returned sounded very much as though Esau had neither forgotten nor forgiven. "Behold he cometh and four hundred men with him!" What could this mean except that the smoldering fires of twenty years were soon to break in flames? Jacob arranges his possession and his family in such order as seemed best adapted to appeasing his brother's wrath, and then gave himself to a night of prayer by the side of the brook Jabbok. Through divine interposition, tragedy was averted and Jacob saw his brother's face "as though I had seen the face of God."

The brothers did not tarry long together after their reconciliation. Esau insisted on their return to Mount Seir together; but Jacob, no doubt questioning the durability of their patched up differences, found a way to persuade Esau to return home alone, while he himself turned westward across the Jordan to tarry in the vicinity of Shechem. The only recorded meeting of the brothers after that was at their father's funeral. Their final separation seems to have been constrained by mutual mistrust.

Jacob descended into Egypt and died there. Esau finished out his days in Mount Seir. After the decease of the two brothers, their descendants kept up memories of past relations, and seem to have maintained some sort of communication, doubtless through the good offices of traders who passed back and forth between Egypt and the lands of the East. The contentions, however, of the two boys were transferred to their descendants, and when the children of Jacob came out of Egypt en route to the land which God had promised them, their journeys soon brought them to the border of the land of Edom (Edom is Esau), and the men of Edom denied them passage through their land. This refusal made it necessary for the children of Jacob to make a long, wearisome, dangerous circuit in order to reach the plains of Moab whence they could pass over to their possessions. This fresh affront confirmed and renewed the quarrels of the past and made irreconcilable enemies of the two nations.

When the sons of Jacob were settled in their own land, what must have been their chagrin to find that the southern boundary of their own land was the northern boundary of the land of Edom! Israel became the stronger people, and gloried in the temporal prosperity which was the birthright of Joseph. But the Edomite nation remained hard by, like a thorn in the side, and was always a check to the pride of Jacob. Sometimes there was actual war between the two nations. Even this was easier to bear than the continual irritations which arose from the ill wishes of so close a neighbor. When foreign foes came to trounce his brother, Esau stood by as a ready ally of the enemy or else showed too great readiness to share the spoils should his brother collapse. Strong kings arose in Israel and put the nations round about under tribute; but none was able to utterly obliterate the Edomites or make of them permanent friends. Edom was a mountainous country, and Bozrah, the principal city, was built among the impregnable rocks.

Finally, Edom became the synonym and symbol for all enemies of God and of Israel. No word of cursing was stronger than to liken one to an Edomite, and nothing caused a quicker flush of shame to a son of Jacob than to remind him that his old enemy was there on his border unconquered and unconquerable. Kings of Israel and humble inhabitants of the villages of Judea used to look off down toward Edom and its impregnable city, Bozrah, and pray for power to root out the offending neighbor; and for a leader who would be able to lead a conquering army down to and back from that hated citadel.

The beauty of David and the splendor of Solomon passed. Sons of these giants held sway and passed away, and still Edom was there. By and by these dreams of earthly empire began to give way in the hearts of prophets, and the souls of these holy men became big with the pressure of the Messianic hope. They began to feel and to say that a leader would come who would set up a new order and establish the glory of Israel on an everlasting mountain top. These prophets reached out for figures which they might use to encourage the faith and hopes of the people. These holy men reached out to nature about them and told of a fruitful desert, a singing forest, skipping hills and mountains, roses in Sharon, lilies in the valley, rocks in weary lands, lions breaking fetters and flourishing roots springing from dry ground. They said the coming One would be like these, but on a glorified plane. They reached to the heavens above and described the coming One as "Sun of Righteousness," "Morning Star" and "Pavilion" of God. The lamb was the symbol of His sacrifice, bread was token of His sustaining grace, and water was typical of His life-giving force. No one name was sufficient to describe Him, so they called Him Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. And since they could find no pedigree more honorable, they called Him Son of David. It seemed that these good men had about exhausted their resources in the effort to find descriptive adjectives that would make the object of their vision truly real and attractive to others as He had already become to them.

Then one day Isaiah, whose words sound more like the speech of an eyewitness than that of a prophet speaking hundreds of years in advance, looked down toward the land of Edom. Ordinarily such an exercise would serve to dampen the fervor of a patriotic Jew. But Isaiah was seeing visions of the coming Messiah. His thoughts and desires and dreams of the night were filled with forecastings of the glory of the "desire of all nations" for whom he waited, and who was soon to appear. And so when he looked down toward Edom he saw in his vision what no man of Israel had ever seen in history. He saw a torn and tattered company of his own people coming back from

that land of the ancient foe. This company was unlike any other such company that had ever come back over that road in that there were unmistakable evidences of success in their bearing, and victory was expressed by their very tread. These people had evidently been down to Edom, had conquered that terrible foe, and were now returning to Israel to spread the glad news. At the head of the company marched a leader unlike any Isaiah had ever seen before. He wore the raiment of royalty, and had every mark of kingly bearing, and yet His face was covered with blood and spittle, His eyes were red from weeping, His face was marred, and His garments were torn and stained with blood. Who could this be? this suffering Conqueror whose appearance described victory at high cost?

Sustained with courage born of the surging Messianic hope in his own breast, the prophet cried out, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength?" The answer came from the Leader of the triumphant host, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." But Isaiah was not yet clear as to how the Conqueror could also be the Sufferer; so he further inquired, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?" The Conqueror answered back, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Then signifying the Edomites, the ancient enemies of God, He continued, "I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

The vision and the dialogue pass on to us a life-size picture of Christ as the everlasting Conqueror. Let us observe:

1. That this Conqueror did not camp on the border of Edom, but went down to the hitherto impregnable city of Bozrah, and wrought a victory that was complete. This is what Jesus Christ did when He came down to make atonement for our race. He did not stop in the golden palace of Caesar, with the royal robes of Herod, among the learned sons of Levi or with the landed, merchant class of Israel. He came down to a carpenter's family, was born in a stable, was cradled in a manger, lived in poverty, never held any office in either Church or State, died ignominiously between two thieves upon a Roman cross of wood, and was buried in a borrowed tomb. He went clear down to Bozrah in paying the price for our redemption. He spared not Himself, but went down to the very mudsill of the house of man that He might lift up the lowest and restore them to God and take them to heaven.

Jesus does not ask for easy cases. He takes all who come. He is able and willing to save all who are lost. The rich, the poor, the high, the low, the educated, the illiterate, the wise, the humble -- "Whosoever will, let him come." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). No one else ever gave such a wide invitation. He draws no lines as to who may come, and He draws no limits as to how fully He will save. He is the Conqueror from Bozrah, the citadel of the worst nation there is. No longer shall the bars of wickedness separate men from hope. No longer shall the bands of evil habit hold penitent souls in chains. Jesus the Conqueror from Bozrah is here!

2. But the Conqueror did not stay in Edom. After meeting and defeating His foes, He came away in triumph. The story of Christ's redemptive work is not finished at the cross or at the tomb. There was a Calvary that was followed by a period of darkness and uncertainty. But there was also a glorious Easter morning. At the break of that holy day Jesus took upon Himself the form and power of the endless life, broke the bars of death asunder and came out of the grave, alive forevermore. When He came out in triumphant resurrection, He came with the keys of death and hell hanging from His girdle -- symbols of His universal sovereignty. The blood that stained His garments was His own blood. He had power to lay down His life, as others have, but He was different in that He had power to take up His life again. If He had stopped at the cross or at the tomb, He might have won our pity. But in His resurrection He wins our confidence and our faith. He went to Bozrah, but He came back again. He was dead, but now He is alive forevermore.

We all need a Christ of power, as well as a Christ of love. It is His resurrection from the dead that guarantees us that He is the Christ of power. We have heard of the Christian Jew who promised to accept another as Christ, if that other one could be "so born." Now we take no chances when we propose to hang our eternal destiny in faith upon anyone who can go down into death as Jesus did, and then come out of the grave in glorified form. None other ever did these things of his own power and holiness, and no one else ever will. He who is Himself the "truth, the life and the way" is my Saviour today. He breaks the fetters of sin for me. He sets my captive soul free. He conquers all my foes, and makes me conqueror too.

3. Finally, we observe that those who marched with the Conqueror shared with Him in His triumph. St. Paul draws a wonderful picture with just a few strokes of the pen when he speaks of Jesus as having "Led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Ephesians 4:8). The picture has the example of an earthly king for its background. This king has been elevated in his chariot. Captives taken in battle are chained to that chariot and follow after it. The king lavishly throws money to the crowd that lines his "way of triumph." And Paul says Jesus is like that. He is now highly exalted, His enemies have become His footstool, and He bestows blessings upon all who follow in His train.

The grace that Jesus gives is not a mere potentiality. It is an effective transforming power. It does not merely account bad men as good. It remakes bad men and constitutes them good. It does not save men in their sins. It saves them from their sins. It does not just give them patience to submit to their foes. It gives them power to defeat their foes. It does not reconcile men to their state. It changes their estate and makes "all things new."

Not only was the Conqueror himself triumphant, but those who traveled with Him had the victory. There is a place in the ranks for all of us. Come, let us join the victorious army of Christ today. "Others have enlisted: why not you?"

\* \* \* \* \*

WE SEE JESUS

Sir, we would see Jesus (John 12:21).

We see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Hebrews 2:8, 9).

The Scriptures draw analogy between Adam and Christ; calling one the first Adam and the other the last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45). The one, the earthly Adam, was the head and beginning of the old creation; the other, the Lord from glory, was and is the head of the new creation, the redeemed on earth and in heaven.

The Scriptures do not exactly say so, but I think they intimate that man was never intended to live forever upon earth. He was placed on probation in the garden of Eden, and had he served out that probation faithfully, he might have been translated to heaven. But he failed in that first probation, and, but for the intervention of Christ, would never have had further opportunity to reach the original goal set before him. But Jesus took up where Adam left off and set in to work out the destiny for man that was originally designed. We are not, therefore, headed back to an earthly Eden; we are headed on to the heavenly paradise which Adam would have reached, had he been faithful in time of trial.

In taking up the human cause, Jesus Christ became heir to all that Adam had or would have finally possessed in righteousness. The redemptive scheme of Christ therefore includes both man and man's environment -- this world and the world to come. Even this earth is redeemed through Christ, and when that redemption is put into full effect, we shall have a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. That new earth will be free from the mar of sin's effects. In it there will be no thorns or briars or other curses. There will be no earthquakes or violent winds. The poles shall be melted up, the sea shall vanish, and the torrid regions shall become pleasant climes. Beasts of prey shall feed on grass and herbs, and nothing that hurts or destroys or maketh afraid shall be found in all God's holy mountain.

In that blessed day yet to come Satan will be bound and imprisoned in the bottomless pit. Temptation shall pass. Trial shall be no more. The nations will study war no longer. Wickedness shall be banished. Sickness and death shall pass away. And the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea; and neighbor shall not say unto neighbor, "Knowest thou the Lord?" for all shall know Him from the least to the greatest. Hail that blessed day! Such a state and such a day are set before the people of God as a "blessed hope."

We do not see these wonderful conditions yet. Rather our eyes must look upon a world cursed by sin and its effects. The world, the earth itself, seems to travail in pain and uneasiness. The seasons are fanciful, the temperature of the earth is fickle, the curse of weeds and thistles is upon our fields. Swamps and deserts and the wild wastes of the sea cover much the larger portion of our earth's surface. Poisonous reptiles and flesh eating animals encroach upon one another and upon the safety of man. Everywhere are the intimations of an afflicted creation.

The worst spectacle of all is the world of mankind. War and destruction eat out the hearts of the nations. Sin and vice bring their curse upon homes, and upon the bodies, minds and hearts of men. The wicked spread themselves like the green bay tree, and make the bad popular by making it all but universal. The innocent suffer. Widows and orphans are prey to covetous and lecherous men. Moral and spiritual confusion are on every side.

There is not, strictly speaking, a vital Christian nation, state, city or town of any consequence upon the earth. There are not many families every member of which is wholly devoted to Christ. There are relatively few hearts in which the scepter of Jesus is unopposed. "We see not yet all things put under him." Nay, far from this, we see the whole world lying in the lap of the wicked one. The sight is nauseating and discouraging.

The author of the Book of Hebrews would not have us stand long to gaze upon the gruesome spectacle of a sinning and sinful world. Rather, he would have us turn from the unfinished work of redemption to gaze upon a perfect Redeemer. Let us see Jesus.

Each of the four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, gives us a true earthly picture of Jesus Christ from the point from which he looks at Him. Matthew sees Him as the Messiah and King of the Jews. Mark paints Him as the Mighty World Worker and Hope of the Gentile World. Luke describes Him as the Son of Man and Saviour of all. John depicts Him as the eternal Son of God and Deliverer of "whosoever will." We are exceedingly fortunate in having these living photographs of Christ, for it is impossible to see Him fully from any one angle of approach.

It is not possible to present Jesus under one type or illustration. If we go to the ancient temple, we find that Jesus is the temple itself, the priest, the altar, the gift upon the altar, the slain lamb, the scapegoat, the ark of the covenant, the tables of commandments, the pot of hidden manna and the almond rod that budded and brought forth fruit.

In metaphorical language, Jesus is the lamb for sacrifice, the dove for gentleness, the lily for purity, the rose for beauty, bread for strength, water for refreshing, medicine for healing, lion for strength, and Friend to cure all loneliness.

The blessings which Christ gives are also depicted in the language of our deep and wide needs. His salvation is bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, rest to the weary, refuge to the fearful, cure to the sick, life to the dying, liberty to the oppressed, freedom to the imprisoned, friendship to the lonely, peace to the distressed, beauty to those whose lot is ashes, oil of joy to those who mourn, garments of praise to the bereaved, shepherd and sheepfold to those who are lost and straying, riches to the poor, wisdom to the ignorant, goodly pearls to the seeking merchant, victory to the soldier, prize to the racer, harvest to the farmer, vintage season to the husbandman, jubilee to the slave, release to the mortgagee, eagle's wings to the traveler, feast to the returning prodigal, election to the politician, message to the preacher, vision to the prophet, incense to the priest, kingdom to the imperialist, justice to the lawyer, pardon to the criminal, adoption to the stranger, song to the poet, harmony to the musician, reason to the logician, feeling to the empirical, perfection to the critic, rescue to the harassed, balm to the wounded, glory to the ambitious, promotion to the humble, reward to the faithful, pilot to the mariner, harbor to the seafaring, rock in the desert to the traveler, well-watered garden to the lover of nature, honey in the rock to the apiarist, oil to the prospector, gold and precious stones to the miner, old corn to the provident, wine to the heavy-hearted, marriage to the lover and home to the wanderer. To anyone and everyone, Christ's salvation is just what is needed and what is desired.

Coming now to the general mountain tops of Scripture from which we may see Jesus, we mention:

1. The pre-incarnate Christ who was with the Father before the world was. This may not mean much to some, but to those of us who worship Christ as God, it means everything. He is the Word which was with God and was God (John 1). His pedigree goes back to eternity. When His opposers mentioned His youth, saying, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He replied, "Before Abraham was, I am." The meaning clearly is that while there was a time when Abraham was not, the everlasting Christ, on the divine side, had no birthday.

The eternities of the past seem forbidding even to the imagination until we see Jesus in their midst. After that these abysses of duration hold no terrors for us. If Jesus was there, the times of the past are friendly to those who love Him. And what's more, seeing He is the Christ of the ages, we have no fear for the future. He is the same yesterday and today and forever. Let us join in with all earth and heaven to worship the King of the ages. Let us "crown Him Lord of all."

2. Let us now look at Jesus as Emmanuel -- God with us. We see Him "made flesh" by the union of His divine nature with our human nature in one complete, indivisible personality. This is the mystery of the ages. We do not think of attempting explanation. It is enough for us to glory in the fact. God did not stand off at a distance, like the priest or the Levite, and look upon us in our helplessness. Nay, He came to us, like the good Samaritan -- came down where we were, and became one of us that we might rise up to where He is and enjoy His fellowship forever.

No mere human Christ can meet the deep needs of the human soul. He must be a human Christ to enable us to approach Him; He must be a divine Christ to be able to lift us up when we do approach Him. Only the God-man can fulfill our need. Let us look at Jesus as the Babe of Bethlehem, the boy of twelve in the temple, the mature Man being baptized of John, the Spirit-anointed Preacher from Nazareth, the miracle Worker in Capernaum, the spotless Example for all the ages -- let us look at Him today and be assured. We have in Him what we need and desire.

3. Then we look at Jesus dying that we may live. In the passage from which our Hebrew text is taken He is described as "tasting death for every man." This is an allusion to a day of execution in some Greek city. The Jews stoned their criminals. The Romans crucified theirs. But the Greeks poisoned theirs with hemlock. When the day came for executing the death penalty upon the condemned, the prisoners were lined up with their backs to the wall in order according to the heinousness of their crimes -- the meanest man at the head, and the others on down the line to the one least deserving of punishment. The executioner came with a vessel in which there was a measured amount of poison, enough to cause the death of every man in the line. The cup was presented to the mean man at the head of the line. He was expected to drink off his share and pass the cup on to those beneath him. Each in his turn received his draught, and in time all succumbed to the effects of the poison.

One day that "chief of sinners" at the head of the line held fast to the cup and drank it to its bitter dregs.. He then passed the empty cup on down the line. The law did not permit a refilling of

the cup, so those in the line were accounted to have died in the man at the head who drank their portion; and by suing for immunity on this basis, they were permitted to go free.

What is this we see today? It is the whole human family ranged before the wall with Jesus standing at the head as though He were the worst of all. To Him the cup of death is handed. In anguish He cries, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away except I drink it, thy will be done." Then He drinks the full contents of that cup, and passes the empty vessel to those on down the line. Many along that line, having seen the deed, cry out in hope and faith, "He died for me! He died for me!" And immediately there comes into the hearts of those who make this claim an assurance that enables them to shout, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!" Yes, indeed, Jesus tasted death for every man. Shall we not all accept the immunity that His sacrifice affords? For my part, I do accept it. I do proclaim, "He died for me! He died for me!" And by faith in His death I find life and peace.

4. When Jesus went back to heaven He did not forget us. Let us see Him now as the Interceding Jesus. In Hebrews 7:25 it is said, "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." As a person Jesus is one, but He is two in natures, and three in offices. In offices He is Prophet, Priest and King. As a "prophet like unto Moses," He was and is the world's peerless Teacher; for He brought to us the full revelation of God. As a "king like unto David" He is destined to reign "from the rivers to the ends of the earth" in the kingdom days yet ahead. As a "priest after the order of Melchizedek," "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The writer of the Hebrews approached the priesthood of Jesus in such a true Jewish manner that we have a right to expect that he will say that Jesus was a priest like Aaron, but suddenly he veers from the beaten track, because a priest like Aaron shows too many limitations. Aaron had sins of his own for which atonement had to be made; Jesus is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." Aaron was mortal and must leave his post at times for rest and food, and must in the end die and leave his post to another. Jesus, however, "was dead, but is alive forever more." The writer must find another for example. He fell upon that strange man who came to meet Abraham the day Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings. Here, as though stepping out of eternity, Melchizedek appeared already established as a priest of the Most High God. After the brief meeting with Abraham, Melchizedek passed from the stage and is heard from no more. Thus, historically, this priest was without predecessor or successor, and he becomes a fitting type of Jesus who did not receive His priesthood from anyone, and did not pass it on to any other. "He is a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek."

One of the ancient prophets describes Christ as sitting at the right hand of God holding ever up before the Father His own hands upon the palms of which are engraved the names of those for whom He intercedes (Isaiah 49:16). The word is engraved, not written or painted. The names are cut into the tissues of the hands that they may not be erased. He never forgets. A mother may forget her infant child, but God will not forget us. There may be those who have no mother to weep and no father to pray; but even they have a Christ to intercede.

Because all the merits of His offering are transferred to the account of others, seeing He has no sins of His own for which to atone; and seeing He never ceases to plead, "He is able also to

save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him." Let us come to God through our interceding Saviour today. Let us have faith that our coming shall be welcomed, because we come in His name and through the merits of His blood.

5. Now we approach Jesus from the mountain top of our own hearts. And we look upon the indwelling Christ. "Both he that sanctifieth and those who are sanctified are all of one for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, In the midst of the church will I sing praises unto thee." In the Old Testament times, proximity to God was measured in terms of approach. God was to go before, He was to stand on the right hand and on the left, he was to be a faithful rearguard. He was to cover with His feathers and support with His everlasting arms. In the New Testament, proximity is replaced with enduement or infusion. Under this New Covenant it is "Christ in you the hope of glory."

The dispensational blessing is the baptism with the Holy Ghost, and of this Jesus said, "He is with you and shall be in you." The glory of the New Testament blessings is in the fact that Christ comes in as Lord of the temple -- the heart -- and that He comes in to abide.

No longer. does God seek a tent of skins or a temple of stone in which to dwell. He stands at the door of every heart and knocks for admittance. If any will hear His voice and open the door, He will come in to abide. O let Him in today. Let Him in in the fullness of His power and glory. Give Him every room in your heart. Make no reservations whatsoever. Crown Him Lord of all in your will and affections. He waits today to save and to sanctify. He longs for a place with you that can be all His own.

6. Finally we come to look upon the presenting Christ: "Behold, I and the children that God has given me." Since Jesus is the same forever, we may follow Him on to the day when He stands again at the head of a group, but not as He stood at the head of that other group of the guilty and condemned. This time He stands at the head of the line of the redeemed. Once these stood with their backs to the wall. Now they stand with their faces to the throne. Once they were culprits before God. Now they have been pardoned, sanctified and glorified. Jesus holds today a cup of joy, instead of the cup of death from which He drank before. Upon the throne is the infinite Father. About the throne are the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders. After these are the tall archangels, then the singing angels, cherubim and seraphim, and all about are the livened household messengers of God. Before these all Jesus stands with His redeemed. The Redeemer is glorified in His redeemed. Having saved them from all sin, and having kept them from falling, He now presents them before the presence of the Father's glory with exceeding joy. To all assembled holy intelligences He calls, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me." The group here presented are from all nations, kindred tongues and tribes. They were a motley crowd when first they saw the Lord, but they looked at Him and were lightened and transformed. Their night turned to day in the light of His face. Their hearts of stone were melted and made new in the furnace of His love. They stand here bloodwashed and happy forever. Among their joys none is greater than the joy of being pleasing to their Lord. And although this is heaven, they ask nothing more than to be permitted to look on His face forevermore.

Now we know that seeing Jesus means to look to Him in faith. And now, as in the days when Israel was in the wilderness, "there's life for a look." In those days those who were bitten by

poisonous serpents were restored by looking at the brazen likeness of the serpent that had bitten them. We today are recovered by looking to Christ. Peter, you know, was able to walk on the waters of the Sea of Galilee so long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. We are exhorted to run the Christian race, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

Whosoever you are, my friend, look to Jesus. Look to Him in faith for pardoning mercy. Look to Him for sanctifying power. Look to Him for keeping grace. Look to Him in life and in death. Look to Him, dying sinner -- "there's life for a look." Look to Him trembling Christian, look to Him for victory now and evermore. We do not as yet see all things put under Him, but we see Jesus. Thank God for the beatific and soul-transforming vision. We see Jesus!

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## 8 -- CHRIST AND CAESAR

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:32, 33).

When these words were spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ, they must have sounded to those who heard them like contradictory words. It must have seemed to the apostles themselves that the Master was extravagant and wanting in caution. To talk of victory when there were so many evidences of defeat must have seemed unwarranted.

There had been no darker day in the life of Jesus than the day when He so unqualifiedly asserted, "I have overcome the world." Not only were His enemies becoming more insistent in their demands for His arrest, but He himself admitted that He was to be arrested and crucified. Such an admission might have been expected to elicit an expression of discouragement. He might have been expected to say, "We are overcome. Our cause is lost. Our plans have failed. The world has won the contest."

But there in the very shadow of Gethsemane, Pilate's judgment hall and Calvary's cross, Jesus said, "Be of good cheer. I have won." The disciples might have thought it their duty to console the Master. They may have felt impelled to ask Him not to be entirely disconsolate. But it was Christ himself who asked those in less jeopardy than Himself not to worry, but to rest in peace because the victory is won.

There were two persons in those days who were striving for world dominion. One was Caesar, Emperor of all the Romans, and Christ, the Prophet from Galilee. These two persons were diametrically opposed to each other, so that only one of them could actually win. For if one won, the other had to lose. This was true because the ideals of life and of conquest held by each were such as to erase the ideals of the other. We do not hear the words of Caesar in the Bible. But history approves the statement that he claimed to be the victor. He claimed it with emphasis. He would tolerate no competitor. He taught his followers to say, "There is no king but Caesar." He claimed not only to be the greatest man, but he claimed to be a god. He asked not only for political

allegiance; he called on men to worship him. Caesar said, "I am the conqueror." Jesus said, "I have overcome." Who really was the winner? Let us consider:

1. The odds as between these two persons:

a) Caesar was rich. He lived in what was known as The Golden Palace; he was waited upon by myriads of servants; his table groaned under a load of fine wines and tasty foods. His furniture was rich and costly. His robes were of silk and fine-twined linen. His slightest wish was law, and nothing he desired was ever denied him.

Jesus was poor. He was the world's poorest Man. He was born in a stable; cradled in a manger; was often hungry, once He sought His breakfast from a barren fig tree; He was more homeless than the foxes and less provided for than the birds; He was dependent on friends for a place to spend each successive night, and may have spent some nights in the open for want of an invitation; He found it necessary to perform miracles to pay His taxes, and to feed His friends; and when He died He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

b) Caesar had his legions equipped with the most approved implements of war. These hardened men were under oath to carry out the will of Caesar, and wherever they went the people trembled and surrendered. No armies on earth could stand before the soldiers of Caesar.

Jesus had only a staff with which to assist Himself when walking. His followers were unarmed fishermen and tax-gatherers. In the whole company there were never more than two swords; and even these were used only for symbols, not for either offensive or defensive combat.

c) Caesar was of a proud, influential race, and himself held the highest office among the mighty. Those who were not born Roman citizens must obtain that standing " with a great price." The immunities of a Roman were many, and his privileges valuable indeed.

Jesus was of a despised and provincial race, and among these He never held an office of any kind. He was born "King of the Jews," but He never assumed any kingly functions or invested Himself with any kingly garments. He was a humble representative of a humble race.

d) Caesar spoke the classical Latin language. This was the language of Cicero, of Cato and of the men of polite literature. It was the language of the imperialists. Ability to speak it made one a patrician among the people of the nations.

Jesus spoke the Galilean dialect of the humble Yiddish, for the most part, although He was also master of the Greek tongue. His was the speech of the prophets and the saints. People of high standing in the state did not bother to learn the language which was his mother tongue.

Surely the odds were against the claims of Jesus, and a court of worldly contemporaries would certainly have given the award to His competitor. They would have said, "Caesar wins. But let us now make the bold assertion:

2. That in spite of appearances to the contrary, Jesus won. His claim, "I have overcome the world," was fully justified. He was the true Conqueror. And think of the extent of His claim. He did not stop at saying, "I have overcome the Jews." But "I have overcome the world." His claim was that He had overcome all that organized opposition to God that is represented by the spirit and temper of the present world. Jesus had defeated that world and had transferred the conception of good to an altogether different realm.

The evidences of Jesus' victory did not immediately appear. But time, "the leveler of all things," has vindicated His testimony. Let us think of it on just the same grounds as we covered in making the study of comparisons and contrasts at the beginning:

a) Caesar's money has melted and vanished away. His golden palace is now an unimportant ruin on the hill above modern Rome. His crown has become a shapeless mass, and its whereabouts is unknown. His kingly garments have been eaten by the moths. And there is nothing left to remind one of the splendor which was and has now passed away.

But Jesus, the once homeless, now has a place at millions of firesides. His crown of thorns has become a crown of glory. Millions of earth's poor, and a considerable number of its rich, pour out their gold and silver as offerings to Christ every week. At His tables millions of the poor and needy of the earth eat every day, and still there is room. Yes, Jesus won in the matter of riches on earth. But this is the least part of the story. In the Father's house of many mansions, Jesus lives and reigns today. Yes, Jesus won. He won by a margin so wide that even the dullest can see it.

b) Caesar's legions have long ago been disbanded, and no one who can by any show of right claim to be his successor has any troops to take their place. The equipment that Caesar's men counted efficient is now discounted everywhere, and his engineers have ceased to plan and develop other implements to take their place.

But Jesus has three hundred million "soldiers of the cross" among the nations of the earth, and these soldiers are keen and ready to go anywhere their great Commander bids them go. Others have held their slaves by force and fear. Jesus holds His friends by love. The bands that others have forged have been broken by contrary wills. But the love of Christ constraineth men everywhere to do His bidding.

c) Caesar's proud Roman race has become absorbed among other peoples, and the name Roman is no longer a badge of honor. But the new race of Jesus, called Christians, involves within its scope the very finest, purest and most honored people everywhere. And within the possession or stewardship of the friends of Jesus are the principal glories of earth.

d) The language that Caesar spoke is now listed as "a dead language," and is spoken by no nation in the world. Only those who have time for the antiquities are likely to hear even the name of Caesar, and when the name is used, it is usually given as a cognomen to a favorite dog or horse. And only those who have time for the niceties of education can pronounce the words of the language which was Caesar's.

But all the languages of men are the languages of Jesus. His name is substantially the same in every tongue. Little children learn to lisp this name before they can call their mother's name. Strong people delight to say this word in their prayers. Old tottering saints are heard to pronounce the name of Jesus even as their feet touch the dewy grass along the banks of the Jordan of death. The words of Jesus have been translated into more than a thousand of earth's languages and dialects, and the Bible has to be ruled out always when "best seller" books are being discussed, for twenty million copies and more are printed and distributed every year. The number grows, rather than diminishes, as time passes along.

Yes, Jesus won. And the fact that He won assures us that we who follow Him may win also.

### 3. Why did Jesus win?

a) Jesus won because His kingdom was founded on truth. He proclaimed Himself the way, the truth and the life. He never made use of deception in promoting His work and extending His kingdom. "If it were not so, I would have told you," He said in giving to His disciples intimation of the blessed future which was their heritage. If there had been no home for them in heaven, He would have told His disciples so before they left their earthly homes to follow the homeless Christ. When men came to Him in professed discipleship on the supposition that henceforth He would feed them as He did the multitudes in the desert, He disillusioned them at once, even though the fruit of many days was swept away with one fell blow under His exhortation, "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." The burden of the message in which these words appear was that He would offer no immunities to secure followers.

We must build upon truth also, if we would build a kingdom that will stand. Character is of more importance than reputation; being is more fundamental than doing; thinking is of higher order than speaking; dependability is a more valuable virtue than appearance.

I went one day to assist a father whose boy had become enmeshed by the law. When first arrested some months before, the boy, who was really a juvenile, testified that he was eighteen years old. This made him "eligible" for the penitentiary from which he might be released at the end of a year or eighteen months. But if he said he was fifteen he might be sent to the "school" for a period covering six years or until he was twenty-one. He had listened to the advice of criminals in giving the false testimony. Now that his father had come to his rescue, there was a chance that the judge of the juvenile court might give him over to the custody of his father. The main hindrance was the fact of this deliberate falsehood. The thought of this irked the judge, who turned upon the youth every few minutes during the hearing to ask him to recite this saying: "The greatest lesson that anyone can learn is to tell the truth."

We must build on truth in word if our kingdom is to stand. Even in the affairs of this life there is no asset like the reputation for veracity. In the business world one's fortune is about made when those who have had dealings with him arise to say, "His word is as good as his bond." The banker accounts veracity and honesty better security than bonds and real estate. How much more does God honor those who speak the truth in their hearts?

But truth is more than words. It is action. It is thought. It is purpose. It is reality. It is in this deeper sense that the disciple may, like his Master, become the truth. Whatever is not of truth will perish. Falsehood is sand. Truth is rock. Let us build on the rock.

b) Jesus won because the motive of His kingdom was love. Caesar's kingdom was founded upon force. The motive of his subjects was fear. They obeyed to avoid punishment or to obtain the reward of a servant, but Jesus won His followers by love. They followed Him as disciples or learners, and He called them friends. There were no threats to enforce obedience. If there were warnings, they were always mentioned in gentle tones. It was love that moved the mighty God to give His Son for our redemption. It was love that moved the blessed Saviour to give Himself for our sins and for our salvation.

There are those who say love will not suffice in a world of force. But where is the kingdom of Caesar or of Alexander or of Napoleon today? They founded their empires on force, but their kingdoms have perished from the earth. Jesus founded His kingdom upon love and it stands yet today -- in a world given to the worship of force.

If we want our kingdom to stand, let us follow Jesus, not Caesar. Let us build on that supreme love for God which is the love of worship. To "love nothing but God," means to love God so much that every other love is as hate compared with it. This supreme love is sometimes called fear, for there is a full measure of reverence in it. And it is notable that one who fears God in this sense of supreme love does not fear anything or anybody else. The good are the brave, and the gentle are the great.

If our kingdom is to stand we must build upon love for our fellow men. This love is not to be a pretense. It is to be the implanting of God in our hearts. We must build on the special love that God's children have for one another -- the love of fellowship; and we must build upon the love that good people have for the unsaved -- the love of pity.

Looking over the record of King Herod, sometimes called "Herod the great," one remarked that it were better to be Herod's pig than to be his son. But the words of the Master and the record of Christians prove that one is fortunate, if he must be an enemy, that he shall be enemy to the followers of Christ, for the Master gave special commandment to His followers to love and treat kindly their enemies.

The world has tried different methods of ridding itself of enemies, but if one hates his enemy, this hate will poison his own blood and affect his bodily health; it will poison his mind and make him unhappy; it will poison his disposition and make him disagreeable and unsatisfactory even to his friends. If one mistreats his enemy, he must always guard against his enemy's spirit of retribution, and live in fear lest his enemy "get even," for getting even in a quarrel always means to leave the account in favor of the last one who attempted to square the score. If one kills his enemy, the ghost of the murdered will haunt the murderer in his dreams, and the laws of men and the law of God will unite in bringing justice and punishment. The Christian way to rid oneself of his enemy is to love his enemy, and despite what men say, this plan works. By means of it the enemy is made harmless, and he may even be changed into a friend.

c) Jesus won because He built His kingdom by the method of service. Caesar and "the princes of the Gentiles" built their kingdom by the method of exaction. The greatness of Caesar's kingdom was computed upon the basis of the number of people who could be made to serve and to bow down. The strength of Christ's kingdom is described in terms of the number who will receive what He has to give. Caesar's symbol was a yoke of iron. Christ's symbol was a yoke lined with love. Caesar demanded that men minister to him in abjection. Jesus girded Himself with a towel and washed His followers' feet. Peter was still confused when Jesus approached him, and thought to show his great regard for his Master by refusing to be served by Him, but Jesus corrected Simon and said, "If I do not serve you, you have no part in me." Then the enlightened disciple said, "Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."

If we are to win we must build our kingdom on service. We still have Caesar's example, and there are still those who would be served, but the truly rich are not those who can hire others to do their bidding. The truly rich are those who have no need of that which others can do for them. Those who complain that opportunities are scarce mark themselves as subjects of Caesar; for opportunities to serve are everywhere.

Men, worldly men, have been marked by covetousness, and they have counted success in terms of what they have accumulated. But Jesus set forth a new method. He remarked that the giver is more blessed and happy than the receiver. Black is the color of Caesar, for it represents receiving and holding. White is the color of Christ, for it represents giving away all one has.

The watershed of the Lebanon Mountains gathers supplies for the Jordan River. The stream starts as a mere rivulet, but gains strength as it moves along. It passes through that small lake which in the days of Joshua was called "the waters of Merom," and enters the north end of the Sea of Galilee. This little sea is thankful for the gift, for it is its principal source of supply; but it does not attempt to hold any of what it gets; it passes its supplies on to the low lands beyond. The lake has been called "Blue Galilee," both because of its depth and plentitude and because of its beauty. About this little lake the principal cities of Old and New Testament times gathered. The water is well stocked with fish, and everywhere there is the air of fruitfulness and blessing.

The Jordan River is not content to flow in a straight line, but by constant bendings, as though reluctant to hand over its supplies to the lake below, makes two hundred miles out of what would be sixty-six on a straight line. At the last the Jordan pours its full favor into the upper neck of the Dead Sea. This sea, in contrast to Galilee, gives away nothing, and its very grasping becomes its curse, for about this sea no cities are built, no fields of grain wave, no marks of happiness appear. The waters themselves sustain no life. It is truly "the Dead Sea." Miserliness killed it.

The Dead Sea is the symbol of Caesar's way of life. The Sea of Galilee is the symbol of Christ's way of life. Looking at these symbols, we scarcely need to be told again that we must build upon service, if we are to build a kingdom that will stand.

d) Jesus won because He included so much of the future in His plans. The reach of Christ's compass was so great that He could accept a passing defeat as just one of the incidents on the way to final and permanent victory. Caesar required his good today, but Jesus said, "My kingdom is not

of this world." In the midst of the fiercest conflict Jesus quit praying for the passing of the immediate bitter cup, and asked for the enduring victory. He could pass over the tears and blood of the garden for the prospect of the glory He was to have with the Father later. He could endure the judgment hall of Pilate and the cross upon which His body was stretched by thinking of the house of many mansions into which He was later to enter. He could leave off contending for a tent, seeing He was heir to a house of enduring foundations.

And what shall we say of ourselves? Shall we lengthen the compass of our faith and hopes until it embraces death and judgment and eternity, as well as the life that now is? We are the true ancients when we stand upon the shoulders of those who have gone before us. We shall become true children of eternity when we lengthen our plans until they embrace the home of God.

Caesar and those who adhere to his kingdom of time are subject to disappointment here, because they have no plans for using anything that is not given to them now, but it is different with those who built as Christ did. Some people can say sincerely, when the good of the present is denied them, "God is eternal, I am immortal, therefore I can wait." If good is denied the good man here it will be given to him later when he needs it more and can keep it longer.

Life to the follower of Christ is not a battle only -- it is a war. When the Christian seems to lose a battle, he does not greatly grieve, for he is interested in the war. This is the lesson of the Book of Revelation. This is, as I think, a difficult book, but from the high hills of the early chapters one may see the higher hill of the concluding chapters. When one starts to make his journey from the first to the last, he encounters many dark days and darker nights, but if he keeps in mind the end from the beginning, he knows all the time that when he comes out he shall see the "city foursquare," and the new heaven and the new earth. He knows that the end is victory for God and righteousness and for all those who put their trust in Him, and if there is victory in the end, there is victory all along, for "all is well that ends well."

There is a day beyond for the child of God. I am as sure of it as I can be sure of anything. It is like the boy who could not see his kite for haze and for distance, but who told the inquirer, "I know it is up there. I can feel its pull." I can feel the pull of heaven. I know it is up there, even though my mortal eyes cannot behold its towers. In my program of life, tomorrow is more important in the way of reward than today, and because my plans embrace tomorrow, I shall win. I shall win because Jesus won, and because I am building as He taught me to build.

We have come to a critical hour. It is customary for speakers and writers to remark upon the times, but the times never do solve personal problems. One must choose his own course. Times of political peace and economical prosperity have often been times of peril to men's souls. Times of stress and trouble have served others as they did David by making them realize the need of God. But the times neither save nor damn. Our own choice is what counts.

If we are normal we want to win in this race and battle of life. We want to be overcomers, but we feel instinctively that it would be easy for us to lose. Think of living a whole lifetime on earth and then missing heaven in the end. Think of having all one's kingdom swept away by a calamity of any sort whatsoever.

Patrick Henry appealed to history as his guiding lamp. Let us also appeal to the past for instruction. The condition of the world has never had very much to do with the individual Christian life. When martyrdom was the common price of professing to be a Christian, Christians multiplied so fast that the saying was, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." When the times became more agreeable, Christians lost much of their heroic spirit, so that when a new period of persecution arose, its first days were marked by many recantations. Also, a study of the past reveals that periods of prosperity have spoiled men, as the tropical climate is said to do, so that, paradoxically, good days materially have been bad days morally and spiritually.

At any rate, we cannot choose the kind of times in which we shall live. God has brought us to the kingdom for such times as these. It is ours to make good in the times, and not to make the times. Jesus said to those about Him, "The kingdom cometh not with observation." That is, things are not necessarily what they seem to be, but "the kingdom is within you." It is not when did you live? but how did you live? It is not with what complacency did you fare? but toward what port did you sail?

Just as surely as we have been called to fight, just that surely we have been called to win. On that ground, we are sure we are all called to be Christians, for just as surely as Jesus won, just that surely shall we win if we follow Him.

We are foolish if we insist on proving again that the way of Caesar is the way of defeat. That has been proved too many times to require repetition. Even in the world of science, progress is made only by those who are willing to accept the experience of others and build upon what these others have demonstrated.

Christ won because He built His kingdom upon truth as its foundation; upon love as its motive; upon service as its method; and upon eternity as its scope. We can win too, if we build upon Him, and build as He built.

That rains of God's mysterious providences, the winds of human misunderstandings and persecutions, and the floods of satanic opposition will try all our houses. But if your house is built upon the rock of God, it will stand.

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## 9 -- GOD'S VOICE IN THE LIVING WORD

God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son (Hebrews 1:1, 2).

There is an indispensable intellectual phase in the approach to God. There are some things a man must know and believe before he can come to God with his heart. One must know something about God before he can know God. To make clear these essentials, God has laid tribute to every form of speech in word and in writing in the past, so that we have a Bible that is both simple and profound, even as we have about us a book of nature that the child can approach, but the sage cannot exhaust. Our Bible has in it in close proximity the twenty-third Psalm and the Book of Job;

John 3:16 and the Book of Revelation; the story of the conversion of Zacchaeus and the Book of Romans.

But although God in former times used the prophets as active agents in revealing His will, Jesus Christ Himself is called "the Word" (John 1), and the fullest possible revelation of God to men has been made through Him. The saying that God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" clearly indicates that there is to be no further and no other revelation until His coming in judgment power.

God hath spoken unto us by his Son:

1. He has spoken unto us in the miraculous birth of His Son into this world. Jesus was born as no other ever was born or ever will be born. Those who would pass this point as though it does not matter should stop and think again. It is not enough for us to say that no matter how He was conceived and brought forth, it is enough that He came. No, God hath spoken unto us by the miraculous birth of His Son.

The manner of Jesus' birth was made the subject of detailed prophecies before the event came to pass. This was both in order that men might know Him when He came, and because there was no other way that He could come and fulfill the demands of both Sin-bearer and Saviour. God was Father, Mary was mother, and in the birth there came into being the unique God-man who could take our sins upon Himself, and yet be able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by Him. There is no use to look for scientific explanation of the virgin birth of our Lord. The explanation is in the infinite wisdom, love and power of God. But the very manner of Christ's coming is a revelation both of what God is and of how He would transform us into His likeness. In Jesus God was made flesh and dwelt among us.

2. God hath spoken to us in the spotless life of Jesus. Even the enemies of Jesus have always had to say, "I find no fault in him." The records of His life show that He was faultless in both word and deed, and the philosophy of human action requires that He be pure within that such a course should show forth in Him. In the pressure and care of the busiest day, His conduct and words brought commendation to the highest ideals. The record is summarized in the sentence, "He went about doing good." In the intimate circle of His closest friends He maintained an integrity that justified in them the deepest confidence.

Sometimes doubtful men have tried to claim that Jesus was a myth -- the creation of mass imagination. But in making such an explanation it becomes necessary to say either that the inventors were good but unbalanced men, or else bad, conniving deceivers. And neither of these horns of the dilemma is tenable. The Christ story shows too much genius to be the invention of unbalanced minds, and no bad connivers would be interested in foisting off such a character on the world, seeing His influence would be always against the designs of the inventors.

For little children, youths, people in mature life, and those bent with age, Jesus is the example. He is so near to the weeping penitent that the extended hand may touch Him. Yet He goes on before the holiest saint and beckons to a higher plane. He is so touched with feeling for our infirmities that the veriest beginner instinctively looks to Him for sympathy and help. Yet the dying

saint turns to Him in faith as his sun sinks behind the horizon and meekly says, "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Yes, God has spoken unto us by the spotless life of His Son, and by this voice hath condemned sin in us, and yet hath told us that we need not always be sinners, seeing there is a sinless One who is willing and able to lift us up, make us new, and give us power to walk as He walked. No sinner could save us. Only a spotless Son could be our Saviour.

3. God hath spoken to us through the peerless teachings of His Son. Even the earliest words of Jesus have never required revision. When He spoke, the last word was said on the subject. Since Jesus spoke, men have often gone a long way around, but in the end they have come back to say again what the Master said.

There was spontaneity in the wisdom with which Jesus spoke. Those who knew Him as the untutored Son of a carpenter, ask incredulously, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" When questions were brought to Him he never asked for time to consult with the elders or to read books. Always the answer was ready on His lips, and the answer was always correct. He scrupled not to set out what "they of old time" had said, and then over against their false conclusions Jesus gave the true conclusion, "But I say unto you." His words sprang from His heart and lips like waters from an artesian spring, and "after that no man dost ask him any more questions."

Jesus made free use of the parable. Thirty parables are found in His report. His material was at once the simplest and most profound. By the same words He instructed children and confounded philosophers. He spoke on the origin, duty and destiny of men with an authority which admitted of no quibbling. He was indeed "a prophet like unto Moses," but He differed from Moses in being greater than he. He told us all we need to know about the way to God, and ever since then good men have spent their time, not in inventing ways to heaven, but in making men know Christ's way.

4. God hath spoken to us through the marvelous miracles of His Son. Some time ago I read a book called "The Faith that Rebels." It was in reality just a new setting for the miracles of Jesus. The author said that the great majority of men take things as they find them and reconcile themselves to them. But the faith of Jesus rebelled. It rebelled against a troubled nature, so He stilled the tempest and quieted the waves. It rebelled against poverty, so He sent to the sea for a fish whose mouth bore gold enough to pay double temple tax. It rebelled against sickness, so He healed the multitudes who waited upon His ministry. It rebelled against death, so He broke up every funeral He ever attended, and accounted death a vanquished foe. It rebelled against sin, so He cast out wicked spirits and forgave the transgressions of those who believed on Him.

The miracles of Jesus never taxed Him. Always there was a sense of fitness in whatever He did, and also the intimation that He could have done much more, if more had been required. If the boat went off without Him, He overtook it in the fourth watch by making the water a pavement for His feet. If the people came to the desert to hear Him preach, and stayed until late dinner time, He supplied their needs without opening a fish market or founding a bakery. If a man was let down by his friends on whom he depended for help in entering the healing waters, Jesus gave him health without his having to reach the water at all. He did not require that the ailment should be

pronounced "curable," nor did He demand that the applicant should bring a recommendation. When they came -- the blind, the deaf, the lame, the halt, the palsied, the leprous -- "he healed them all." There was never a case too hard for Him. He was Master of the earth, the sea and the sky. Through His marvelous miracles God hath spoken unto us of His wisdom, love and power in language that we cannot fail to understand.

The men of His day came without apology to ask Jesus to do the impossible, and this gives us our lead, "Can a leopard change his spots or an Ethiopian the color of his skin?" These things are easier than that a sinner should become a saint, but "nothing is too hard for Jesus." His marvelous miracles have taught us that. He can make us new without and within, and can give us the power of endless life within our mortal frame. Jesus is the moral, as well as the physical, miracle worker.

5. God hath spoken unto us through the high priestly sufferings of His Son. Instinctively men have known that nothing less than a sinless sacrifice can make atonement for sin. This is why they have sought out the innocent dove and the spotless lamb, and this is why John pointed out Jesus in the crowd, and cried, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!"

Sin is such a deep, dark, inexcusable thing that nothing short of the deepest, fullest atonement can make a way for its pardon and cleansing. But Jesus, the only begotten Son, was the most that God could give, and Jesus went all the way to Calvary to die ignominiously upon the cross.

It is strange that anyone could ever hate One so miraculously born, so spotless in life, so peerless as a teacher and so marvelous in the miracles which He wrought! Surely that hate which hounded Him from the days of Herod the king who sought to snuff out the life of the newborn Christ child, to the time when He hung His limp head in death upon the cross, must have been inspired by the devil. It was right in the midst of His life of kindly service that the shadow of the cross fell across His pathway. He had turned His face as though He would go to Jerusalem. His disciples warned and pleaded. But Jesus knew His hour had come. He entered Jerusalem amidst the triumphant acclaim of the multitudes. For the second time He used His authority to enter the temple and cast out the traders who desecrated it. He taught and answered questions, as in days gone by. He preached to His disciples on His own second coming. He rested in the home of His friends at Bethany. He ate the Passover feast with His disciples in the upper room in the city. He passed out to the Garden of Gethsemane to weep and sweat and pray. The agony of death came upon Him, and He saw that only by means of His life's blood could He make a way of escape from hell for the millions of earth who were on their march to endless death. He was arrested like a common thief. He was tried illegally, and convicted on the basis of perjured evidence. His back was scourged in an effort to make Him confess to some felony. In mockery, He was robed in purple and crowned with thorns. He bore His own cross until His strength failed. At "the place of skulls" He was nailed to a cross of wood, and lifted up between earth and heaven, as though rejected by both. They gave Him vinegar mingled with gall to drink. They derided and mocked Him during His suffering. They spat upon Him. They cast lots for His vesture. They left Him to die alone. He yielded up the ghost, and cried, "It is finished." All this appeared to the senses of men.

But there was another side to the scene on Golgotha. It was the divine side. In surrendering to us His only begotten Son, God spoke to us of His pity and His love, and the cross, from being an instrument of shame, became the sign of salvation. God indeed provided a Lamb and gave Him to die upon the tree, and through the merits of that death a way to salvation and life has been opened for us. Jesus died that we might live. He came down to earth that we might go up to heaven. He walked the dusty, stony road of our world that we might walk the golden streets of His world. He drank the vinegar mingled with gall that we might drink the water of life. He wore a crown of thorns that we might wear a crown of glory. He was lifted up upon a cross that we might be lifted up upon a throne. He suffered that we might reign. He went to the grave that we might come up out of the grave. His sufferings were high priestly, and through them we have access to God by faith.

6. God hath spoken to us by the triumphant resurrection of His Son from the dead. The cross without the resurrection might speak to us of pity. But the empty tomb speaks of victory and of power.

No fact of human history is more fully verified than the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the miracle of miracles. It is the trumpet call to faith in God. It is the unanswerable argument of God to the validity of His revelation. Jesus arose from the grave on the morning of the third day and became the firstfruit of them that sleep. His resurrection guarantees our pardon and cleansing from sin, and our victory over death in the end. "Because he lives, we shall live also."

The would-be founder of a cult in France came to Richelieu for advice. Said the cultist, "I have worked out the thesis for a new religion, and I believe it is a good one. It would soon spread and become popular, if I could get a few disciples to begin with. How can I get a few faithful men who will follow me in the days of beginnings until my religion gets a start?" To this Richelieu made reply, "I'll tell you what to do: go out and get yourself crucified in some public place. Go to the grave and remain three days. Then on the morning of the third day come out alive and transformed, and show yourself to a selected company, and you will have followers who will stand by you through difficult times and good." No one but Jesus can ever meet that challenge.

The great of earth usually have markers at their graves, but when one inquired as to why the grave of Jesus is not marked, the reply was, "Why, He is not dead, and they do not mark empty graves." Let us go today with those disciples who came on that Easter morning and beheld the place where they laid Him. Let us look again at those discarded grave clothes. Let us think again of that glorified body which could pass through the bolted door and transport itself from Jerusalem to the mountains of Galilee without the use of visible means. Let us gaze upon those gaping wounds in hands, feet and side, and let us cry out with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God."

7. God hath spoken to us by His Son in the outpouring of His post-mortem Successor -- the Holy Spirit. The men of this world hasten to complete their work before death overtakes them, but Jesus rejoiced in fuller activity in the carrying out of His mission in the days following His decease, when the Holy Spirit should be His Executor.

On the verge of His going away He said, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another comforter." That promise was fulfilled fifty days after His crucifixion when the Holy Spirit

was poured out upon the one hundred and twenty disciples who waited in prayer in the upper room at Jerusalem.

This coming of the Holy Spirit was not only dispensational for the Church, but it is the pattern experience for the people of God in every age and generation, and this voice of God by His Son speaks today every time an individual Christian feels his own heart warmed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit came through the intercession of Jesus Christ, on the basis of His atoning work, so God speaks to us today in the person of Christ's post-mortem Successor.

No intelligent person will discount the testimony of Christian consciousness. The Spirit does bear witness with our spirits when we are the children of God. There is an effective response to the prayer and faith of the penitent seeker after God, and when that witness comes, let it be remembered that this is God speaking to us by His Son.

No further word from God is due. He hath spoken unto us by His Son. Any further word would be declension, not progress. The most exalted Messenger has brought the fullest message. What more is left? The rich man in hell was told that if his brethren would not listen to Moses and the prophets, they would not hear though one went to them from the dead. How much more then are we without excuse to whom God hath spoken by His Son?

There is only one fitting conclusion. It is the same as the author of Hebrews makes to his observations on this final word from God: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the words spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

Let us hear and heed His message today.

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## 10 -- THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

### SCRIPTURE LESSON -- Luke 17:22-37.

And he said unto the disciples, The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here; or, see there: go not after them, nor follow them. For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone

from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

This passage is not announced as a text, but is offered as a scripture lesson to bring before us the subject of the Second Coming of Christ. On a subject so far-reaching, it is necessary to select just a few things for emphasis that we may stay within the limits of what is expected of a preacher in the delivery of one sermon. We will therefore direct our thinking today to four propositions in connection with the theme: (1) We shall consider the importance of the theme; (2) We shall consider the meaning of the theme; (3) We shall consider the time of Christ's coming; and (4) We shall consider the manner and purpose of Christ's second coming.

1. The importance of the theme - Christ's Second Coming. We begin by saying that the theme is of great importance, and this is indicated:

a) By the unusually large place given it in the Scriptures. It is calculated that one-twentieth of the New Testament deals with the subject of the Second Coming of Christ, and the theme is not limited to the New Testament.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament which did not have their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus as the Babe of Bethlehem, nor were they fulfilled during the stay of Jesus upon earth. Many of these prophecies have not even yet been fulfilled. The reason is that these prophecies had reference to the Second Coming of Christ, and not to His coming as the Saviour of the world.

We hold no brief for the unbelieving Jews of Jesus' day, but we do remember that their Scriptures described the coming of a kingly one who was to abide forever, and was to extend His kingdom "from the rivers to the ends of the earth." So when One of humble birth, with no robes or throne or crown or kingly paraphernalia came among them and announced that He would stay for but a time, and then be crucified and taken back to heaven, how could they see in Him the object of their hopes?

It is true that the Hebrew Scriptures contained the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah in which the Messiah was described as a suffering Saviour, and there were many other passages in which His humility, meekness and even His death were depicted, so that the men of His day should have discerned the signs of their times, and should have seen in Him the promised One. It has always been easier for men to see a king on his throne than to see him in the service of the poor, and so while we do not excuse the contemporaries of Christ, we think it is fair to say that they had some reason for their reluctance in accepting the claims of One who did not fulfill all they had been taught to expect of the Messiah.

Chronology does not register clearly when one is looking down a straight line. Things far distant are likely to become confused with things close at hand. It is clear to us now that the Old Testament prophecies are in two distinct classes: those that had fulfillment in Christ's first coming to the earth, and those which had reference to His second coming. Those of the first class majored on His miraculous birth, His spotless life, His peerless teachings, His marvelous miracles, His atoning death, His triumphant resurrection, and His glorious ascension. Those which referred to His second coming dwelt upon His kingly functions, the glory of His kingdom, and the governmental and judgment aspects of His work. A summary of these two sections is made in Hebrews 9:28, "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." That word "without sin," is used here as elsewhere in this and other epistles for "without a sin offering." Christ came once to be an offering for sin and to provide the way of salvation for all men, and now to them that look for Him He is coming the second time without a sin offering unto salvation.

No one who sets value on our holy Scriptures will doubt for a moment that a subject which occupies so prominent a place in them as does the Second Coming of Christ is an important subject. If one were to take his Bible and cut out every passage that relates to the Second Coming of Christ he would come back with a book so mutilated that it would be unrecognizable. God must love this subject, seeing He has given it so large a place in His Book. Therefore we do well to love it too, and to give it a large place in our thinking and planning.

b) The importance of the theme is further indicated by its close connection with all the vital themes of the Bible. Unless it is also vital, it detracts from the category of doctrines with which it is so constantly and intimately connected:

(1) It is intimately connected with the doctrine of Christ's proper deity. When Jesus was being tried before the Jewish court, the high priest and others asked Him many questions to which He made no reply, but when the high priest charged Him to say whether or not He was the Christ, and when the high priest offered the challenge in the form of the legal oath, so that silence would be interpreted as a negative answer, Jesus answered, "Thou hast said." This was the form of positive affirmation, and to it Jesus added, "Marvel not at this, for ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with the holy angels with him." That proving occurrence has not yet taken place, but will when Jesus comes back to the earth in the glory of His Second Advent.

(2) This doctrine is connected with the doctrine of repentance. In Acts 3:19-21 Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus Christ, which was before preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

(3) It is connected with the doctrine and experience of holiness. In I Thessalonians 5:23, Paul's prayer is recorded in these words: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." And in I Thessalonians 3:13 the purpose of the apostolic ministry is said to be: "To

the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God even our father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints."

(4) The doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is connected with the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead. The fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians has been well named "the Resurrection Chapter," for it does have more to say on the subject than any other passage of equal length in the Bible. Describing the order in which the dead shall rise, Paul says in the 23rd verse, "Every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

(5) The doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ is connected with the doctrine that Christ and right shall finally triumph -- The Doctrine of Christian Triumph. This is the burden of the Book of Revelation, the last book in our blessed Bible. The central theme of this wonderful book is the Second Coming of Christ, and with this central theme is connected in vital relation the promise that God will make "all things new," and bring us out at last in triumph over all evil. One cannot disconnect this promise of ultimate Christian triumph from its corollary -- Jesus Christ is coming back to the earth the second time.

2. The meaning of the theme. We pass now from the importance of the theme to a consideration of its meaning; for even though we are convinced of its importance, the subject must be defined before we can be sure as to what our attitude toward it should be. Let us present this phase of the subject under two heads, and consider:

a) Some things the Second Coming of Christ does not mean:

(1) It does not mean the same thing as death, for in the fifteenth chapter of I Corinthians it is said that when Christ comes He must reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet, and, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (I Corinthians 15:26). Now if death is the last enemy to be destroyed, and all enemies are to be destroyed at the Second Coming of Christ and thereafter, there can be no way by which the Second Coming of Christ can be identified with death.

(2) It is not to be identified with any calamity great or small. It is not the sinking of the Titanic, some great armed conflict among the nations or some great natural tragedy like an earthquake or a tornado. In fact it is not a calamity at all. It is described in Titus 2:13 as "that blessed hope." It is the blessed hope of the people of God, and although they who are unprepared may think of it with dread, the whole creation beneath groaneth in travail for the deliverance that will come when Jesus returns to the earth again.

(3) It is not identified with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Read the Epistles and you will see that many of the most precious promises of His coming were given to people who were already filled with the Holy Ghost. Paul himself claimed encouragement in the promise of Christ's Second Coming; and surely he was within his rights when he testified to being sure he was in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ (Romans 15:29). In the very nature of things men cannot be told to hope for that which they have already received.

(4) It is not the same thing as the spread of the gospel throughout the nations of the earth. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew the preaching of the gospel among all the nations of the earth

is given as one of the signs that the Second Coming of Christ is near at hand; and, since a thing cannot in reason be a sign of itself, the Second Coming of Christ must be something else and something subsequent to the preaching of the gospel among the nations.

b) What the Second Coming of Christ does actually mean:

On this point we quote just one passage of scripture, and that is Acts 1:9-11, "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

We do not confine our quoting to this one scripture for want of others to quote. We offer it as being sufficient. The matter could scarcely be stated more definitely and clearly. Even one who reads it for the first time will without hesitation say, "This means that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of man, the very same as He who was born in a stable, cradled in a manger and died upon a cross, is coming back to this world again in His personal and bodily form, glorified and deathless, but completely identified with Him of whom Moses and the Prophets did write, and with whom Peter and James and John and the others used to eat beside the sea. This is what is meant by the Second Coming of Christ.

3. Now we come to the proposition of the time of His Second coming. Perhaps someone will immediately remember that the Scriptures say, "No man knoweth the day nor the hour," and he may say that on this account the subject is no concern of ours. But this is just the opposite of the divine intention in withholding the exact date. We know this from the Master himself. He said that because we do not know the exact time, it might be any time, and therefore we are to be ready and watching at all times.

Whatever may have been the date on the divine calendar, we know that we of this generation are closer to it than any that have lived before us. And if the hope of Christ's Second Coming has been an anchor to the faith of good people in years gone by, it should hold us stronger than ever it held them.

The Scriptures assure us that the coming of Christ is certain, but they also inform us that the time is imminent. Being imminent does not mean that it has always been fixedly near; it does imply always that it may be near.

A famous British preacher once addressed himself to each in a company of friends, saying, "Friend, do you believe Jesus will come tonight?" Taken aback by such a question, each friend in his turn answered, "No, I do not really expect Him tonight." Then the preacher solemnly quoted, "In such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

While we do not know the exact time of His coming, and must resist all temptation to "set dates," yet we are told in the Scriptures something about the conditions that will exist upon the earth at the time of His coming, and by a thoughtful observation of these signs, we may hope to

avoid becoming children of the night; for by these we should be able to tell the approximate time of His coming. By the signs of the times we may know that His coming is near at hand, even as observers know by the budding of the fig tree that the summer is at hand.

a) Jesus tells us in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew that the time of His coming will be marked by the collapse of human governments. He says it will be a time of trouble among the nations, and a time when men's hearts shall fail them in that they shall not know, shall not even claim to know, what to do.

We do not care to speak in detail, and in times like these we should not permit ourselves to be critical, but thoughtful people everywhere must know that politics is in a bad way everywhere. The world has run its cycle politically. It started out with the absolute monarch, who, like Nimrod, held the power of life and death over his subjects, and ruled with an independent and iron hand. It then passed to the aristocracy, to the constitutional monarchy, and to the democracy. That is as far as it can go -- from one man to all men. All these forms have proved faulty, and we must now either start over, jump off the cliff into anarchy or go back to the God-rule which man rejected in Eden. Some think we will go on into anarchy. Let us hope we shall go back to Theocracy, the God-rule.

The world had run its cycle religiously when Jesus came the first time as Priest and Prophet. It has now run its cycle politically and it is time for Jesus the King to appear.

I called in the home of my new neighbor because I had heard there was sickness there. Not being at all acquainted, we allowed the conversation to lag for a time. It being national election year, the subject drifted easily to politics.

Cautiously my new neighbor said, "The common people cannot expect anything from the old Democratic Party. It was a good party in the days of Jefferson and Jackson, but it has sold out to the bosses and is now run to the advantage of the favored few. The common people have no stake in the success of that party."

I mused on the matter for a little time, and then replied, "I quite agree with you. No, the common people, of which certainly you and I are part, have no reason to expect any advantages from the Democratic Party."

My neighbor was silent for a decent moment that he might not appear insulting. Then he said, more cautiously than before, "And the old Republican Party, which was the people's party in the days of Abraham Lincoln, is sold out to the capitalists and is the tool of big business. A victory for this party would be of no consequence to the common people."

Here again I hesitated, and then said, "Well, I quite agree with you on this matter also." My neighbor was puzzled, for undoubtedly he had expected argument on one or the other of the propositions. After a little wait, and by this time suspecting the political creed of my new friend, I went on, "And there is no hope in the new Socialist Party. This party is made up of sore-headed Republicans and disgruntled Democrats, and the leaders are no better and no wiser than the groups

from which they sprang. A stream cannot rise higher than its fountainhead, and there is really no hope for the common people in this new party."

Aroused to deep curiosity by now, my neighbor asked, "May I inquire as to what party you adhere?"

"I am very glad to tell you this," I replied. "I am a Theocrat."

The man was dazed and finally said, "I have been a student of politics and economics for a number of years, and I have to confess that I never even heard of this party before. Would you mind telling me about your platform and principal purpose?"

"I shall be very glad to tell you as much as I can," I answered. "The leaders of our party have discovered that politics in its various forms has broken down because it has not been able to find a leader who was both good enough and big enough to give the country and the world the kind of government that is needed. So we have bent our energies on the task of finding one to fill the place. And we are happy to announce that we have found Him and are now voting for Him in every election. We believe that when He is elected and inaugurated, He will find a way to straighten everything out and that we shall have an age of peace and prosperity in this country and in the world. Theocrats believe in the God-rule, and our hope is in the Second Coming of Christ, and we are glad to say that there are evidences that His coming draweth nigh, and that we shall have a regime that will satisfy the deepest desires and hopes of men."

After a brief pause, my neighbor asked, "What is going to become of these parties and of the governments of the world?"

"They are all destined to go to the junk-heap," I answered.

"But you do not appear to be agitated concerning this junking of parties and governments," said my neighbor. "What do you calculate to be doing when all this junking takes place?"

"I plan to be right and escape this wreck that is threatened; and when it is at its worst, I plan to be standing before the Son of man in the glory of His second advent."

My neighbor closed the conversation with the simple observation, "It must be very nice to possess such a hope as that."

It is nice to have such a hope, and with this in my breast, I look upon the wreck of nations about me, and yet rejoice that the day of the king's coming approaches apace, and in glad anticipation, I call out, "Amen! Even so come, Lord Jesus."

b) Jesus and His apostles asserted that the time of His coming would be marked by godlessness in the world and apostasy in the Church. Jesus himself said, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Paul said it would be a time when there would be the form of godliness in the Church accompanied with a denial of the power of godliness. Also it was

said that men would love pleasure more than they love God, and that there would be indifference toward God and religion like the indifference of Noah's time.

These thoughts are painful, and we do not wish to dwell long upon them. He must be a hopeless compromiser who can fail to see in the world and in the Church all the things involved in these scriptural warnings. Backsliding and indifference are appalling. God has not failed, but men have failed God, and this dispensation threatens to finish in about the same way former dispensations have finished. God started man right in the garden of Eden; man finished by eating the forbidden fruit and being banished from the garden. God gave man another chance in Seth man finished by a deterioration that required a deep flood of waters to wash away its filth. God gave another chance in Noah and his family; man finished in the idolatry of the postdiluvian period. God gave another chance in Abraham and his family; man finished in the bondage of Egypt. God gave another chance in Moses and Exodus; man finished in the Babylonian captivity. God gave another chance in the return of Ezra and Nehemiah; man finished in the hollow hypocrisy of Phariseism and sealed the fate of the old day by crucifying the Son of God upon a cross of wood. God has given another chance in this dispensation of the Holy Spirit, but man is going his own way, and it will be midnight in the world when the cry is made, "Behold) the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him!" Yes, the lukewarm condition of the Church and the prevailing indifference of the world mark these as among the last days, and announce to us in loudest terms, "The coming of the Lord draweth nigh!"

c) James points out (James 5:1-8) that the end times shall be characterized by extreme poverty and colossal riches. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the first "billionaires" of the world have arisen within the space covered by the memory of many now living. The rich men of the past could not have paid the income tax of our "captains of industry and finance. And yet with all these heaped up riches, our own land is cursed with poverty, and two-thirds of the people of the world seldom have enough to eat, and half of them sleep on the ground every night.

d) Paul marks out the breakdown of the family and home as another sign of the last days. Children are to be "disobedient to parents," and many are to be described as "without natural affection." With divorce on the increase, childless homes multiplying, and juvenile delinquency outstripping the figures of the worst prophecies, surely no one will say the times must wait for further deterioration before the end comes.

Conditions in the world, the Church, the home, in business and in social circles are all loud voices warning us that the end of the age is upon us. The world has been sick before; this time it is in the position of an old, worn-out man whose strength does not permit the application of remedies sufficiently strong to result in his recovery. This is the time to look for the coming of the Lord, and this is a hope that arises like a rainbow on every storm cloud of the world's vision. Let us rejoice that the Lord cometh.

4. And now, at last, we come to the proposition of the purpose and manner of Christ's Second Coming. Actually two propositions are involved. But we state them as one because they are so closely associated.

We quote from I Thessalonians 4:13-18, "But I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

While limiting ourselves to this one quotation, we call attention that there are many passages dealing with this subject, and we trust that you who are interested in the theme will not be content to pass without reading all that the blessed Book says on the subject. If you have read it all or think you have done so, read it all again. But from the passage before us, and from the other passages involved in the complete reading on the subject, we gather the following:

a) The manner of Christ's coming will be sudden, and by the great majority of men, unexpected. The occurrence is likened to lightning which flashes in the twinkling of an eye to its far destiny in the heavens. Christ's coming will be so globe-encircling as to seem to begin at every point at once. It will be midnight at one place on the earth, daybreak at another, and noonday at yet another when He shall appear (Luke 17:34-36).

b) The purpose of His coming is to gather out the holy living and resurrect the holy dead from earth and sea, reward all these with a part in the first resurrection, and bring them all to share with Him "the marriage supper of the Lamb," which is the initiation of the redeemed and glorified into the full joys of their heavenly estate.

c) Beyond His lightning-like appearing and the glorification of His Church, there are unfoldings of the divine plan that are interesting and appealing beyond measure. There is the return of Christ "with his church," after the marriage supper. There are the thousand years of peace. There are the great white throne judgment, and the ushering in of the timeless eternity beyond. All these constitute a field of prophetic study that is exceedingly rewarding, and, if Jesus tarries, at another time we hope to develop this thesis also. For the present we must let this mere mention suffice.

In our concluding words let us think a little of what the effect of the promise that all these things are to pass has been on others and should be on us.

I think I can see the influence of this blessed hope of the coming of the Lord on the early Church. First of all, it stirred the people to missionary passion and zeal and encouraged them to devote their money and earthly goods to the promotion of the gospel, for to those who expect the Lord to come the things of this world will soon be as though they were not. Poverty and riches matter little to one who expects soon to stand before his Lord. If He is to come soon, then little else matters than that we should spread the news of His salvation, and help gather out a people for His name. This should be the effect upon us today in even a greater measure than upon those of the First Century who cherished this blessed hope.

Then I think I can see that this blessed hope confirmed the saints in the midst of persecution and sufferings. They accounted themselves happy to suffer for Jesus; for they were taught that if they suffered with Him they should also reign with Him. When their backs were lashed, they counted it all joy. When they were pressed with poverty, they waited in patience for the Lord's coming. Should not we likewise find consolation in all our troubles in the fact that the day is far spent, and that Christ is at the door?

I know that the early Christians used the soon coming of the Lord as a basis for exhorting one another to be always holy in heart and in life. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (II Peter 3:11). And let us likewise know that only the "blessed and holy" are assured a part in the first resurrection. No matter how much we may learn about the Second Coming of Christ, all such knowledge will come to nought if we fail to meet Him at His coming with our hands clean and our hearts pure.

Individuals like John of Patmos and Paul in Nero's prison house took courage from the fact that the Lord would soon come and would change their mortal bodies into bodies like His own. John's own words were, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (I John 3:1-2).

Jesus Christ is coming back to the world again in bodily presence like that wherein He went away from the top of the Mount of Olives. All signs indicate that His coming is near at hand, and the Lord himself taught us to be ready and watching always, lest His coming find us unprepared. The manner of His coming is sudden and universal, like the flashing of the lightning. The purpose of His coming is to take those living and dead who are ready to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and with this glorious occurrence to begin the closing acts of the ages of the world preparatory to the ushering in of the timeless eternity which is ahead.

The whole world of mankind may be pretty well included in two classes:(1) Those who are prepared for the Second Coming of Christ and are looking for His coming; and (2) Those who are not prepared for His coming and are not looking for Him to come. In which of these classes are you?

Are you prepared and watching for the coming of the Lord? If He should suddenly appear, would you be glad to hail Him? Are you so delivered from the world that if you should be on the housetop when Jesus comes, you would be content to go on off with Him to the marriage supper without so much as turning back to get your clothes? Are your treasures so fully in heaven and your hopes so fixed on Christ that you would not so much as look back, as did Lot's wife, if you should see the heavens suddenly light up with the glory of His presence? Do you wear the wedding garments so constantly that if the Master should come and find you in the field you would not need to go home for any adjustments whatsoever? When you hear His words, "Behold, I come quickly!" does your heart intuitively respond, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END