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STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

By William Moses Tidwell

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ABOUT CHAPTERS 6 AND 7

Part of Sermon 6, "Why Should I Be A Christian Now," was missing when we first published the electronic edition of this booklet, and it was replaced with "Choice, Heaven or Hell Gained by It," another of W. M. Tidwell's sermons. Subsequently, we obtained the missing text for "Why Should I Be A Christian Now" and this sermon has accordingly been restored in this edition as Chapter 6. And, even though it was not included as part of the original printed booklet, "Choice, Heaven or Hell Gained By It" has been placed at the end as Chapter 7. -- DVM

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01 -- STRANGERS AND PILGRIMS

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (I Peter 2: 11).

Webster defines a stranger as a foreigner or one who is unknown. Thus, the people to whom Peter addressed this epistle were "strangers." They were unknown to the world. They had no continuing city, but were seeking a city to come. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country" (Heb. 11: 13-14). "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11: 16).

These strangers were unknown in the society circle. Like Christ, their blessed Master, they made themselves of no reputation. They were meek, they were lowly, they were clad in the robe of humility, they sought not popularity, fame, and to find favor in the sight of men, their aim and highest ambition being to find favor in the sight of God and to rescue lost souls, to shine as stars in their crown in heaven.

They were willing to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, that He might exalt them in due season. Their conversation, their actions, and their attire, characterized them as real pilgrims who were seeking a better country.

As we look out upon the world today and behold the irreverence and indifference of those who profess to be followers of the One who said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," (I John 2: 15) how sad we are made to feel. We see people puffed up, proud and haughty, self-seeking, covetous, and interested in everything but that which pertains to their future destiny. We find many who profess to know Jesus, seated amidst the gay crowd who throng the theater and other places of worldly amusement, beholding those scenes that are pleasing and fascinating to the eye, but damning and destructive to the soul. Doubtless, if there could be weeping in heaven, as the Christ sits upon His eternal throne and looks down upon those for whom He gave His life's blood, His great loving heart would be moved as it was when He gazed upon Jerusalem. "When he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19: 41-42).

We have an account of the Son of God weeping twice while upon earth. When He came to the tomb of Lazarus it is said "Jesus wept" (John 11: 35). Oh, who can comprehend the depth of those precious words? While Lazarus himself was a devout man, yet his death and burial seems to be a type of a world dead in trespasses and in sin. Again, Jesus wept when He came to Jerusalem, the city that God had chosen, and the place to which many prophets had been sent, and where God had revealed Himself so beautifully and wondrously. But, notwithstanding all the light they had had, they had become indifferent to the things of God, and had fallen into idolatry and sin of every

conceivable kind. And today, as Jesus looks upon those who profess to be His disciples, and at the same time are mixed up with the world, attending theaters, balls, bridge parties and whist parties, races, the clubroom, and various other places of popular amusement, is it at all strange that He should weep, if there could be weeping in heaven?

We are made to realize that God is a God of love, longsuffering, and of great mercy, or else the proud-hearted, self-willed rebellious souls would be cut off.

Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world. Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5: 13-14). And as these strangers went out into the world they were bright and shining lights to point dying souls to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." What do the non-professors think when they go to the theater on Saturday night and there see the superintendent of the Sunday school, part of the official board, and sometimes the pastor-in-charge in the godless throng; and on Sabbath morning (if in disgust they do not turn away from the church altogether) they see the same ones, whom they saw at the theater, endeavoring to work for God? Is it any wonder they should say there is nothing in Christianity and stumble over hypocrites into hell?

We remember that God said to Pharaoh, through His servant Moses, "And I will put a division between my people and thy people" (Exod. 8: 23). And so there was a real division, a division that was so significant that anyone could easily distinguish the Israelites from the Egyptians, and just so there is a marked difference between the real followers of Jesus, who are in the narrow way that leads to heaven, and the gay, godless, self-conceited throng, who are in the broad way that leads to hell.

Some time ago a clear-thinking business man asked the following question, "If I go into Mr. H's home, who is not a professor at all, I will find wine, card-playing, dancing, etc., and if I go into the home of Mr. L., who is an official member of the church, I will find wine, card-playing, dancing, etc., and how am I to tell who is a Christian, if it can't be told by the home life?"

But thank God, there is a difference between the home where Jesus reigns and where Satan rules. They are as unlike as light and darkness. We find in the Christian home, instead of the slush and slime that was generated in the corrupt minds of wicked men, and put on paper as a medium of transmission to corrupt other minds and hearts, books and papers that will elevate or create pure thoughts, noble acts, and help us on to God.

Sometimes we are made to wonder if, in the Great Day, children will not rise up and curse their parents for bringing or allowing brought into their homes this virus they call literature that was the deadly instrument in the hand of the devil that led them from God and caused their souls to be damned eternally.

Again, we find a difference in the pictures on the wall in the home where Christ is honored, and in the one where He is not regarded. Few people seem to realize what an influence pictures exercise upon the mind, and especially upon the mind of the young. It is said that in a certain home in the mother's room, where the little ones were brought up, there hung a beautiful painting of the sea, with a magnificent vessel sailing upon it. To the mother's sorrow and surprise, when her two boys grew up they went to sea, and she said, "Oh, why is it so?" Neither father nor any of their

relations had any disposition to go to sea, but the facts were, as those little ones had played from day to day in their mother's room, and had looked upon that painting, there was instilled into their minds, until it became a part of their very nature, a desire for the sea, and this desire was never satisfied until they found themselves sailing over the briny deep. In some homes we see pictures and statuary that are a disgrace to common decency and modesty; pictures of fashion, pride, and sensuality, that come from hell by way of the brothels of Paris, and then the mother's girl falls into the deepest depths of the darkest sin and the mother wonders why.

God help us who are representatives of Jesus, like these strangers and pilgrims, to demonstrate Him in our homes, in our conversation, in the songs we sing, and in every detail of life, that the world may see and know there is a difference in those who serve God and those who serve Him not.

So while these strangers and pilgrims were not acquainted with the fashions and follies of a Christ-crucifying world, yet they were acquainted with Jesus. Though they were not the favorites of any of the governors or senators, who would grant them special favors, and secure them good positions, yet they were members of the aristocracy of the skies and had sweet fellowship and special communion with the great "High Priest" who had appeared in the presence of God for them.

Someone has said, "Prayer pulls the rope below, and the great bell rings above in the ears of God" and these strangers and pilgrims knew how to lay hold of this rope by faith and set all the machinery of heaven to work for their protection and defense. Not long since some good people were undertaking a work, and to accomplish their purpose they said they must interest the bankers, the merchants, and all the business men. There was one little man in the congregation, who believed in prevailing prayer and looking to the omnipotent God more than to the world, and he said to some of us after the service was over, "It would be a good thing if someone would interest God in the matter."

So what the world needs today, above everything else, is not mere form and theory, but as these strangers of old, to have the Christ life translated into human experience; that is, for Christ to live His life over again through our lives, hour by hour and day by day, so that we would be able to say:

Where He may lead we cannot tell,
Still so He leads, all will be well;
So take us, use us, let us be,
Only dear Jesus ALL FOR THEE.

* * * * *

02 -- INHERITANCE

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1: 3-6).

We find that these strangers were heirs to a vast inheritance. This inheritance did not consist of stocks and bonds or broad acres of fertile soil. It was far superior to all the combined wealth of the world.

But, instead, this inheritance was incorruptible and undefiled, and did not fade away. How unlike the inheritance of those who possess the wealth of the world) and at the same time have no share in the "true riches." Men are striving with all their might to obtain the corruptible things of earth, and the more they gain the more intense is the desire of their covetous souls to increase their possessions. We see men toiling and worrying for gain till they have no time to spend with their families, no time to spend in reading the blessed Bible, no time to spend alone in prayer with God, and as a result they become cynical and a steel-like expression characterizes their faces, all of which prove that their affections, desires and ambitions, are centered upon the corruptible, carnal, transient things of earth. A man may be rich in material things one hour, and in the next a homeless, penniless, friendless beggar. Strange indeed, that intelligent men should spend their labor for that which satisfieth not, as so many do.

Look at the poor, miserable man who has had his heart set upon some earthly idol, and the destructive cyclone or the devouring flames have swept over it and it is no more. His hopes are blighted. The desire of many years is gone and no comfort is to be found for his sorrowing soul.

Thank God, the inheritance of these strangers and pilgrims is not of this character. Fires might rage, cyclones sweep the face of the earth, banks might break, combines and trusts fail, thieves and robbers perform their deadly work, yet their inheritance remains the same; as it is in a country "where moth and rust doth not corrupt and where thieves do not break through and steal."

It is interesting to notice where the inheritance of these strangers is kept. You know the value of property is estimated largely according to its locality. And we see that this inheritance is kept in heaven.

Many people seem to think that when this life is over, we will in some mysterious way float out into a land of myths and shadows and will scarcely know who we are and where we came from. But the Bible does not so speak of heaven. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." And so heaven is a real place prepared for a prepared people. People will sometimes ask the question, "'Will we know each other there?'" And the question might easily be answered by asking another, "Is it reasonable to suppose we will know less in heaven than down here in this world?" At present we are living in a fallen world. Our minds have been impaired by the fall, and most assuredly when this mortal shall have put on immortality and we are completely restored in body, soul, and mind, we will not know less than we do now. Paul said, "'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now we know in part, but then shall we know as even also we are known.'" Yes, at the resurrection there will be a reunion of soul and body. We see at the transfiguration that while Moses and Elijah had been dead for hundreds of years, they were still the same Moses and Elijah. We hear Job saying, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in

my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25, 26). And we know that Christ is our perfect example, and we see that His body went down into the tomb and that the same body was raised and went to heaven, which was a guaranty that all who sleep in Jesus, or are alive when He comes, will be permitted to follow Him.

Surely no finite mind can conceive of the good things God has in reservation for his people, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2: 9).

Doubtless, when the road was dark, as these strangers and pilgrims thought about their heavenly inheritance, they were made to rejoice in their souls.

It is said that a vessel was wrecked and the lifeboats were thrown out and all were taken on board except two persons, a mother and her little son. The captain said, "There is room for only one more. If more than one should get into the boat, it would sink and all would be drowned." What could be done? No time for delay. The storm is raging, but the mother and son are still on the old wrecked vessel. The captain cries out, "Be quick! Room for one more." How sad! The mother looks into the face of her darling boy, takes him into her arms, presses him to her bosom, and imprints a kiss upon his brow; and as she lets him down into the arms of the captain she says, "Johnnie, tell your papa I died for you." So her son was taken safely to shore, while she remained on the wrecked vessel for a few moments and then sank into a watery grave. That was only a mother's love.

Surely, as these strangers and pilgrims of earth went here and there following the lowly Nazarene, they were made to say in their hearts, "While there are those in heaven who are near and dear, and while the riches of this inheritance are more than we can conceive, yet most of all we long to see the man who gave Himself for us, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life."

One day a poor man was at work digging a ditch. The weather was unpleasant, the work was very, very hard, but as the man worked with all his might, there was a pleasant smile upon his face, that characterized him as a contented and happy man. He was also singing hymns of praise. He was a wonder to all who saw him. Finally his employer drove along in his beautiful carriage, and his attention was attracted by the poor ditch cutter, so he called and said, "John, why are you so cheerful and happy?" The man ceased working and looked up with an expression of delight and said, "I was thinking of my inheritance that I am one day to receive. The employer was glad to learn such news, and said to the poor man, "Have you any papers, stating what this inheritance is, proving your rights, and the certainty of your obtaining it? And if so, if you have no objections, I would be very glad to look at them." The response came quickly, "Yes, sir, I have the title and would be glad for you to examine it," and thus saying he drew from his pocket a well-worn Testament and handed it to the man. And oh! what a surprise! Here were two men. One rich in the goods of this world, but a stranger to God, and a pauper pertaining to things eternal. The other had not so much as a cottage he could call his own. He was a stranger and a pilgrim, but while he had no earthly possessions, he had a house "not made with hands" eternal in the heavens. He was a millionaire. He was one of those strangers whose inheritance is reserved in heaven for them.

The richest man in the world today, regardless of his financial standing, is the man who knows God best. Think of Elijah, one of those strangers who walked with God. Likely he had no plush-seated carriage drawn by fast horses in which to ride, yet the great Jehovah was so interested in him that one day He sent a special chariot from the skies, drawn by fiery steeds of heaven, to convey this pilgrim to his inheritance that was incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him.

Look at John on the lonely isle of Patmos. Poor exile, there in that barren, lonely land, but we find that Jesus was there. Thank God, there is no night so dark, no tunnel so long, no home so poor, no desert so dreary, no island so lonely, but we may have Jesus as our companion! And while John was there, homeless and friendless, as far as the world can afford homes and friends, "A door was open in heaven" and he was permitted to look upon the untold riches of the city of God, and receive messages for the world that caused sages to wonder, kings to tremble, and God's people to say, "Lord, let us be prepared when these things come to pass, that we may be ready to receive our inheritance and escape the fiery judgments of God that will be poured out without mixture upon a rebellious world, and with all the bloodwashed spend eternity in that country where there are no strangers and pilgrims.

* * * * *

03 -- KEPT

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (I Peter 1:4-6).

We find that God has prepared and is keeping an inheritance in heaven for these strangers and pilgrims, and that He is preparing and is keeping them for the inheritance. Surely, we should be thankful that it is the great Omnipotent God who does the keeping. No one, for a moment, would have any doubt as to the keeping of this inheritance in heaven, but, sad to say, we find many who will question the ability of God to keep His people down here in this fallen world.

Surely we cannot in our own strength keep ourselves. If we were left alone one moment we would be overcome by the power of the enemy and sink down into sin and shame. But, thank God, the promise is "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isa. 41: 10). Yes, God is not only able and willing to keep His people, but He is intensely interested in each one personally; and wishes you who are His own to be kept for your inheritance just as much as the inheritance to be kept for you. And we find that God not only wishes us to be kept from sin, but to be kept for His service. Not only kept from the power of the enemy, but kept that we may live to the praise of His glory.

If you were to meet a man who was laboring with all his might and acquiring a vast amount of property, and you were to say to him, "Why are you so anxious to accumulate wealth?" and he would say to you, "I am preparing it for my children," and then if you were to see his children uncared for in the slums, partaking of vices that would make them mental, physical, and moral

wrecks, you would say at once, "What an unkind and unwise father." Many seem to think God has wonderful things reserved in heaven for us, but He is not so much interested in our being kept for the inheritance.

We find this inheritance was for one class-for those who are kept. God forbid that we should question the power of the atoning blood to save from all sin, and after having been saved to keep us from all sin. To be sure we cannot be kept from sin until we are really saved from sin, but we remember long years ago there was a messenger sent from heaven who spoke concerning our Lord on this wise, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1: 21). John said, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3:8). And in Heb. 7:25 we have this wonderful passage, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."

So we see the very purpose for which Jesus came into the world was to save people from all sin, and while the great host of sin lovers may make an earnest plea for sin, we praise God there is power in Jesus' blood to cure the sin-sick soul. After the cure by the Great Physician has been wrought, if we will abide in Him, and let His own blessed life animate our souls, we will find His grace and power sufficient to keep us from all sin.

In Isaiah 26: 3 we find a most blessed secret in regard to our being kept-"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee." So many, instead of having their minds stayed upon Jesus, are thinking about the carnal things of earth, planning and worrying until Jesus is crowded out, and their souls are filled with human anxiety and care, and there is no waiting upon God; consequently, when the enemy comes and hurls his fiery temptations at the poor, starving soul, instead of the complete victory that Christ means we should have, there is defeat and shame.

It is said a large eagle had been caged up for a long time. Finally the owner decided to set it free and let it out into the open heavens that God had created it to enjoy. The hour came for its liberation. A large crowd had assembled to see what it would do. The cage door was opened and the eagle walked slowly out, stood for a moment and looked around as if it scarcely knew what to do. Just at this time the sun was not shining, but as the eagle stood there the glistening sun, in its noonday splendor, burst forth from behind a cloud. It continued thus for a few moments and then stretching both wings, and with a loud shriek started toward the sun. Higher and higher it soared in the clear sky till finally it seemed a mere speck, and then passed beyond the vision of the human eye.

Yes, it had been caged up. The earth had lost its attraction for it. It desired freedom Oh how many of even God's children today are bound down What we want is the anointed eye and the upward gaze. God grant that we may have such a clear vision of the Sun of Righteousness that this old world, with all its allurements, will have lost its charm; and we shall "mount up with wings as eagles, we shall run,, and not be weary, and we shall walk and not faint.

In II Timothy 1: 12 the Apostle Paul gives his testimony in regard to being kept: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." For I know WHOM I have believed, not IN whom, as the text is usually

quoted. It is said an old saint was dying and called a friend in and asked him to quote some passages from the blessed Word, and so he began "For I know IN whom I have believed," and the dying man raised his trembling hand and said, "Not I know IN whom but I know WHOM. Do not put even a preposition between my Saviour and myself at this time." Thus we see that Paul really knew the Christ, had become personally acquainted with Him. What people need today is to meet Jesus and become acquainted with Him as their own, personal Saviour. We may have our names enrolled as members of the church and begin to try to keep ourselves, but unless our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life and divine power is imparted to the soul, there will be disappointment, dissatisfaction, and we will not be kept. It is not only necessary to become acquainted with Christ, as Paul had, in order to be kept, but all must be committed to Him for keeping. "For I know WHOM I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him." Able to keep what? Able to keep that which I have committed unto Him. So if we would have all be kept, we must commit ALL.

A little child comes to its mother and says, "Mamma, I want you to keep these toys for me, or they will all be lost and broken." The mother receives them, puts them away to be kept for the child, but the next day the child comes and says, "Mamma, I want part of my toys for a little while," and in a short time the child returns weeping saying, "Mamma, if I had left them with you, you could have kept them." How many times we come to God, when we see how utterly incompetent we are to keep ourselves, and say, "O Lord, I commit all to Thee," but in a short time the consecration is broken. Then comes remorse again. Thus, we see the only way to be kept, according to God's Word, and universal testimony of the most devout souls, is to come to God and make the consecration for time and eternity. Lay yourself unreservedly upon the altar, which is Christ, and trust Him to come in the person of the Holy Spirit and cleanse and keep His temple, and surely He will come in to abide if you will open your heart's door. We need not be so much concerned as to how He shall come in, but we must be sure that all is surrendered to Him; that we yield these stubborn wills of ours to Him to be melted and subdued until every thought, purpose and desire shall be brought under subjection to His will. Then we, by faith, can say, "Lord, come in, in YOUR way. If you desire to come in the earthquake or in the fire, amen. Or if you wish to come in the 'still, small voice amen. Lord, I am not careful as to how you shall come, but I do yield all to Thee, realizing that I am no longer my own, but Thine, and Thine alone, to be kept by Thy power and used to Thy glory."

We have some beautiful thoughts clearly set forth by Miss Havergal in the following: "As to the past experience of the details of your life not being kept for Jesus, look a little more closely at it, and you will find that though you may have asked, you did not trust. Whatever you really did trust Him to keep, He has kept, and the unkept things were never really entrusted. Scrutinize this past experience as you will, and it will only bear witness against your unfaithfulness, never against His absolute faithfulness. The Lord Jesus does take the life as offered to Him and He does keep the life that is entrusted to Him, but until the life is offered we cannot know the taking, and until the life is entrusted we cannot know or understand the keeping. An offered gift must either be accepted or refused. Can He have refused it when He has said, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out?' If not, then it must have been accepted. It is just the same process as when we come to Him first with all the intolerable burden of our sins. There was no help for it but to go with them to Him and take His word for it that He would not and did not cast us out. And so coming, so believing, we found rest to our souls; we found that His Word was true and His taking our sins was a reality."

So, dear reader, He is able to defeat every enemy, conquer every outward and inward foe,
and keep us ready for the coming of our heavenly Bridegroom.

* * *

KEPT
M. W. Knapp

"Unto him that is able to keep you from falling"

(Jude 24).

Kept for Jesus and His glory,
I would every moment be
Kept by Jesus through His power,
Freely flowing unto me.

Kept from sin and needless sighing,
Kept from fear and doubt and pride,
Kept through trials sharp and many,
Kept by Jesus crucified.

Kept 'mid all the world's allurements,
Kept when passions strongly plead;
Kept 'mid storm and persecution,
Kept in every time of need.

Kept when all around seems falling,
Kept when friends unfaithful prove;
Kept, and sweetly kept, by Jesus,
Happy in His perfect love.

Kept for Jesus, Jesus only,
Thus I every day would be,
That His will in its completeness
Ever may be done in me.

Not for self, nor yet for others,
Not my comfort, but His joy,
Not my rest, but His sweet pleasure,
Not my work, but His employ.

Kept for Him, that He may ever
In me show His love and light;
Kept to walk before Him perfect

Not in others', but His sight.

Kept for Him to do or suffer,
As His blessed will may be;
Kept for Jesus, Jesus only,
Kept through all eternity.

* * * * *

04 -- TRIALS

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you (I Peter 4: 12).

We see that while these strangers and pilgrims were living holy, consecrated lives and were kept by the power of God, yet there were many fiery trials along their pilgrim way. We meet some people who tell us that you may remain on the mountain top at all times, where the sun shines brightly and birds sing sweetly and all you have to do is to rejoice, and there will be no dark tunnels through which you will have to pass. And this is all very nice in theory, but we find it is contrary to the plain teaching of the Bible, and the experience of the most devout souls of all ages.

We fear many precious, consecrated souls have been deceived just at this point. They were taught if they would trust God for the infilling of the Spirit, that the conflict would be over; and so they yielded all to God and received the baptism with the Holy Spirit in His sanctifying power. But in a short time the enemy began to hurl his fiery darts and fiendish accusations against them; telling them that they would not feel so and be so tempted if they really had the victory and had been accepted of God. And many times-sad to say-there is discouragement, despondency and failure, because of unwise teaching. The facts are, the foe within has been cast out, the inward conflict is over, but the same devil that tempted the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the Son of God himself, is still living and marshalling all the cohorts of hell against the true follower of Jesus.

So we need not think it strange concerning the many trials that will arise along the pathway of life. Sometimes we hear the remark, "I will not do so and so if the trials come," and we should say, "when the trials come" omitting the "if" because the trials are sure to come.

Again, severe trials are no indication that we are not accepted of God. In the epistle written to these strangers we have these words, "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (I Peter 1: 6). So the oppression of the enemy may be so intense that our spirits are in heaviness; yet God loves us just as well as ever, and through the trials, if we will rest in Him He will stamp the divine image more clearly upon us.

The sculptor takes a piece of marble in the crude state, and there is nothing beautiful about it, but the image is in his mind. He toils from day to day, and every time there is a stroke of the hammer, a piece of the marble is gone and the statue is more nearly complete. So "as the marble

wastes the image grows." Jesus is the great Sculptor. He has undertaken our case, and while the heart is purified and made whiter than snow when we come to Him for cleansing, still there are many things in our lives that are not sinful within themselves, yet they are not like Jesus. And the trials may be instruments under the direction of the heavenly Sculptor to burn away the dross, remove the rough corners, and make us more like our gentle, patient, meek and suffering Lord.

Satan will suggest many times that we are not in the will of God or we wouldn't have such trials; but let us for a moment look at a few of the saints of old. We see Joseph, upon whose life and character there is not found a single stain, hurled into an Egyptian prison. But the record says, "God was with him." And no matter how dark and dreary the prison, if God is with us, all is well. And while Joseph, possibly, did not understand at that time just why it was so, yet it was through this imprisonment that he was brought into special favor with the king.

And we find Daniel, that mighty man of prayer, and the one to whom God revealed the sublime mystery of ages to come, and who had "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" spending all night in the lion's den, and we find his three comrades were bound hand and foot, and cast into the burning fiery furnace, that was heated seven times hotter than was necessary for the usual work. Yet God was with them in such a manner that the old cruel king was made to cry out in utter astonishment, "Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dan. 3: 24-25).

Again the Apostle Paul testifies, "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II Cor. 11:24-27). And as his life was nearing its close, we hear this wonderful testimony: "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" (II Tim. 4:7,8).

And we have John, describing a great multitude, who had once been pilgrims and strangers in the earth; and he tells us the way by which they were so fortunate as to reach this city, and enjoy the blessed rewards they had secured: "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered saying unto me, What are these who are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the

blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7: 9-17).

So it is through much tribulation that we are to enter into the kingdom of God. Yes, there will be times of deep sorrow and sadness, times when the body is tired, and the brain weary, and the mind oppressed and all light seems to be gone, and the enemy accuses, telling us that God has forsaken, and our dearest friends may not understand, and the oppression is so intense that we feel we must sink down beneath the load. But thank God, in the darkest hour, there is an unexplainable, unseen hand that bears us above the waves and prevents the flame from kindling upon us, and the way is so dark and the clouds so heavy, that we cannot see Him yet we know that He sees us and that He has said' "Who is among you that feareth the Lord that' obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isa. 50:10).

So may the dear Lord help us to be absolutely true to Him in the midst of the fiery trials and stay upon our God; and we may be sure that' He who hath begun a good work in us will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ," so that we shall be permitted to join the bloodwashed and sanctified throng in the place that Jesus has gone to prepare where there are no more trials, but where it will be one unclouded day of sweet communion with God and His redeemed children.

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05 -- HUMILITY AND SUFFERING

Humility: God speaks all through His Word in thunder tones against the subtle sin of pride, which is the opposite of humility. In Prov. 16: 5 we read "Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord." Pride is contrary to the very nature of God. And again in I Peter 5: 5 we read, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." And in Mal. 4: 1 we hear the fearful destiny of the proud foretold: "For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

No matter what our social or ecclesiastical standing may be, in the sight of men, if there is that hideous monster of pride in the heart, we are not prepared to meet God. We fear that many of the so called charitable acts are prompted by the selfish motives of a proud heart, to obtain the applause of men. Christ said in Matt. 23: 5-7, "But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at the feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi."

There is a legend that brings out this truth very clearly, which is as follows: On one of the northern lakes there was a flock of wild geese conversing about taking their flight to some of the sunny lakes of the South, and there was an old frog that heard the conversation, and eagerly

requested that he might accompany them. But the geese said to him, "How can you go as you cannot fly?" But the frog said, "If you will only help me to execute my plan I will provide a way," and so the geese consented to help him in any way to secure more comfortable quarters for the winter. So the frog said, "Bring me a piece of that reed." Then he requested that two of the geese should each take an end of the reed in their bills while he himself, with his mouth, would grasp the reed in the center. So all was arranged and they began their exit, and on they went over mountains and rivers until they came to a village, and as the villagers looked up they said, "Oh, how strange! Who could have planned it? What wonderful ingenuity." And as the frog listened, he rapidly grew larger and larger, till he could contain himself no longer, and forgetting the manner of his transportation, he opened wide his mouth, and cried, "I did it." And oh, what a fall!

May the dear Lord deliver us from egotism and pride that will prevent God from helping us and finally sink the soul into the gulf of dark despair.

So we see that Peter exhorts these strangers to humble themselves that they might be exalted. It is said the way up in spiritual things is down. When we are full of our own plans and wishes, and are seeking to have our own way, God cannot do much for us. But if we will come to Him and fall at His feet, and look up to Him, He will lift us above the world and above ourselves, and place us on a higher and broader plane of Christian living, where we will have clearer conceptions of God and His Word, and where we will find our spiritual nature has been enlarged and made more like Jesus; and truly by humbling ourselves we have been exalted in the things of God.

Suffering: This is a world of suffering. People suffer from various reasons and for various causes. When we look back upon this old world that has been drenched in blood for six thousand years, we are made to say: Lord, when shall the end come? Wars, famines, earthquakes, cyclones and diseases in a thousand forms, have swept over the land leaving behind them pain, sorrow, sadness, and death. Even Jesus, who never knew sin, and who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, did not escape.

Let us look briefly at His life, as He is our example. We find in the chapter that is known as the chapter of our suffering Lord, these words: (Isa. 53: 5-7) "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." As we read these words we are made to see the intense suffering of the Son of God, our Saviour. He took our place. He died the just for the unjust. And notwithstanding He was misunderstood, evil spoken of, "oppressed," "wounded," "bruised," for the sins of others, yet He opened not His mouth.

It is said that a minister was invited out to take dinner with one of his members; and while he was sitting there in the elegant home and admiring the beautiful paintings upon the wall, his eyes fell upon the scene of the crucified Lord, as He hung upon the cruel cross with bowed head and mangled form. And just under this sacred portrait these words were written, "I did this for thee; what hast thou done for me?" And as the minister sat there and thought of how much time and

means he had used for himself, and that he had not been willing to endure privation, and hardship for the salvation of poor lost souls; he was made to bow his head in shame and sorrow, and as he wept bitterly, to ask God to forgive him for his negligence and sin.

We find people willing to give up home and all, and push their way through the gloomy, ice-bound regions of Alaska or some other land that they might obtain the wealth of the world. And yet, so few are willing to leave all in search of the precious jewels for whom Jesus died, that are hidden away in the mountains of sin, that would outshine the stars of heaven in our Master's coming kingdom, were they saved by His own precious blood. We find the mother, many times, willing that her son or daughter should go anywhere in order to obtain wealth, but not willing that they should suffer anything that souls might be redeemed from Satan's cruel grasp and saved from a burning hell.

When Washington's army was in camp at Valley Forge, there was intense suffering among the soldiers. They were cold and hungry, and as they walked, their bleeding feet left their prints upon the frozen ground. Yet they did it willingly because they desired freedom and loved their country and their general. But, today, notwithstanding multitudes of our fallen brothers are bound down under the cruel hand of the enemy, and have never so much as heard of Jesus, the One who alone can set them free, so few are willing to make the sacrifice that they might know Him who alone can save.

We remember hearing a missionary, who had spent several years in China, and was in the homeland for a brief time, relate the following incident: "One day there came an old Chinaman who had been graciously saved. The missionary had been telling how, in order to be saved, they must know about Jesus; and the new convert looked up so eagerly into the face of the missionary and said, 'Did your father and mother know about this Jesus?' To which the missionary replied, 'They did.' And then he said with tearful eyes, 'Why then did they not come and tell my father and mother about Him, so they too could have been saved?'"

Oh, dear friend, how can we though mean sacrifice, hardship and suffering, sit down at ease when all about us there are the dead and dying who are perishing for the lack of something that we have in our possession, but are too selfish to rise and give them?

On a certain battle field there were many wounded soldiers. Their piteous cries were to be heard on every hand. They were lying in the open field in the burning sun; they were calling for water. But no one dared to go it seemed certain death as they were lying in direct range of the enemy's guns. Finally there was one man who could stand it no longer. He went to his general and asked permission to carry water to the poor dying sufferers but the general said, "You will be instantly killed." But the man said, "I am willing to go. I must go. Their cries are more than I can bear." Then the general said, "Go." So he filled a pail with cool water and leaped over the breastworks among the dying men and began to administer the water to their parching, feverish lips. The army on the other side saw what he was doing and not a gun was turned upon him. So all that afternoon he was in that place of desolation and despair administering to the wants of the suffering men.

And surely, we today, are among the wounded and dying who are perishing for the Water of Life And the sad Macedonian cry is coming up from the darkened lands of earth, but for fear of a little suffering or privation, we remain in our homes of ease and comfort while the poor souls, for whom Jesus died, live a Christless life, die a Christless death, and pass into a Christless eternity.

It is said a young man fell overboard and was drowned, as the people thought, when the body was reached. He was a stranger, it seems. A number worked with him for some time, but did not see any signs of life; so they called to a gentleman who was sitting near by, who had taken no interest, and said to him, "'Do you not think we have done all we can do?" To which he replied, "'I think so." This gentleman, who had sat by so carelessly and unconcerned, had a son on board, but he thought he was on the vessel. But just as he said he thought all had been done that could be done, his eyes fell upon the unconscious form, and to his horror and surprise, he saw that it was his own son. And immediately he decided that all had not been done that could be done, and so he worked until his son was revived. Oh, how selfish we are. Are we not on a wrecked vessel, and are not many sinking, and can we not hear their sad cries?

We are told in I Peter 2: 21 that we are called unto suffering, and should we not, regardless of privation or hardship, lay ourselves upon the altar for sacrifice or for service, and let every God-given ransomed power of our being be used for the salvation of lost souls, so that when Jesus shall come to make up His jewels we may, with all the strangers of earth, join that happy, blood-washed throng, on the bright shining shore, where we shall never again wander from our Father's home?

If the news were to come to us, that there is a city on this globe, where pain, sorrow, sadness, and death could never enter, regardless of any difficulties which might confront us we would decide to go there. And, thank God, there is just such a city, the new Jerusalem, prepared for all those who will, in obedience to His divine command, deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow Him, and to gain an entrance into this city where Christ and the redeemed are, will be cheap at any cost.

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VICTORIOUS TRAVELERS

"O travelers, where are you going?
You seem to be not of this land;
You seem to be pilgrims and strangers,
A happy, victorious band."
"O yes, we are seeking a city,
Before us the prophets have trod,
A city whose walls are salvation,
Whose builder and maker is God."

"O travelers, what is your language?
Its accents fall strange on our ears;
It fills us with dread consternation,

With longings, with doubts and with fears."
"We're speaking the language of Canaan,
A fruitful and beautiful land,
Which drinketh the water of heaven,
Its gardens and vineyards are grand."

"O travelers, what is your raiment?
So strange it appears to our sight;
Our garments are sin-stained and dingy,
While yours are so spotless and white."
"We're clad in the robe of salvation,
The garment of praise, too, we wear,
We follow the fashions of heaven,
Our treasures and mansions are there."

"O travelers, what is your diet?
You seem to be richly supplied;
You seem to be feeding on dainties,
O will you the secret confide?"
"We're feasting on manna from heaven,
We're eating the good of the land;
We're drinking the wine of the kingdom,
The best that our Lord can command."

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06 -- WHY SHOULD I BE A CHRISTIAN NOW?

In Isaiah 55: 6 we read, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found and call ye upon him while he is near." In the first place we would state that it means a great deal to be a Christian. We are not Christians by nature. We are not Christians when we are born of the flesh but of the Spirit. Not when we are born of our earthly parents, but when we are born of God. We are not Christians by natural generation, but by supernatural regeneration. Some, falsely, tell us that we are in the kingdom of God when we are born and all that is necessary is development and education. But this is contrary to the inspired word of God. In Eph. 2 we read, "And you hath he quickened [made alive] who were dead in trespasses and sins.... and were by nature children of wrath." Not children of wrath by choice or practice, but by nature. Of course if the child dies before he arrives at the age of accountability he is quickened and cleansed by the provisional blood of Christ and the grace of God and goes to heaven.

But the question is asked, "How may I become a Christian?" Here there is much confusion and erroneous teaching. But we believe the Bible is clear. Reformation is not enough. One might reform and not know God. The drunkard might cease to drink, but that would not prove he is a Christian. Turning over a new leaf, signing a card, joining the church or being baptized is not sufficient. Salvation is conditional. When Christ died all were provisionally saved but all were not experientially saved. God saves all who meet His conditions and keeps all who endure to the

end. Faith is the one condition of salvation. "Therefore, being justified by faith we have peace with God" (Rom. 5: 1). But repentance is a condition of faith.. Repentance is godly sorrow for sin and turning from sin to God. Remorse is not repentance. The little girl stole the cake and ate it and it made her very sick. Her mother said, "Are you not sorry?" "Yes," she replied, "I am sorry the cake made me sick and I am sorry you found it out." This was remorse. Conviction is not repentance. God convicts and the sinner repents. It is one thing to hear the alarm clock at four in the morning and another thing to get out of bed! Conviction is hearing the clock and repentance is getting up. So if one is to become a Christian he must be genuinely sorry for sin. Sorry enough to give up all sin and give it up forever. One boy was constantly treating another boy very badly and then saying, "I am sorry, but went right on just as he had before. One day he treated his playmate fearfully bad. The wronged boy went off and sat down. Then the other boy called out, "Oh, come on back and play, I am sorry." To which the wronged boy replied, "What kind of sorry?" That is what God wishes to know. Will we give up all sin and give it up forever? These are God's conditions. God will not and cannot forgive the impenitent. We hear much about faith but not much about repentance these days. But it is impossible to believe, in the sense that brings salvation, till we repent. Doubtless multitudes believe with a mere intellectual assent and are deceived and will wake up in hell. This is the popular method of the day. But it is a heresy that damns souls. The Christian worker has a fearful responsibility.

Salvation from sin is a marvelous, miraculous thing. Jesus did not come, as multitudes wickedly teach these days, to save us in sin but from sin. The angel said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus is not a sin regulator, but a sin exterminator. He will crucify the old man and electrify the new man. The curse of the age is the devil's worldly sinning religion. We pay the price and are delivered from all the sins we have ever committed; we are saved from sin and from the love of sin. From the world and from the love of the world. Jesus said, "If any man love the world the love of the father is not in him." Of course this does not mean the brooks, plains, flowers and mountains, but the worldly things that have been perverted by the devil. Sinful pleasures. The Christian does not love the cards, dances, corrupt movies and such like. He loves God and the service of God. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things have passed away and behold all things are become new" (I Cor. 5: 17). It does not say if he has joined the church, reformed, been baptized, etc., that he is a new creature, but if he is in Christ. Old-fashioned, Holy Ghost repentance and faith, inspired by the Holy Ghost, will put him in Christ. Then he can sing, "O happy day, when Jesus washed my sins away. He taught me how to watch and pray and live rejoicing every day. Happy day, happy day when Jesus washed my sins away."

But now we are to give a few reasons why we should be a Christian and why we should be a Christian now.

1. Because it is right. We know this is a simple reason, but it is true. God is our benefactor. Every blessing of every kind that we have ever enjoyed is a gift from God. He is our Creator. It is in Him that we live and move and have our being. It is God's ground on which we walk; God's air we breathe; God's water we drink; God's clothes we wear. It is a mean man who will walk on God's ground, breathe God's air, wear God's clothes and enjoy God's blessings and refuse to serve God. He is an ingrate. Suppose you were homeless, friendless and penniless and someone took you in and then you went out and became his enemy. You would be a wretch. It is said a soldier, during

the Civil War, was wounded and bleeding and dying on the battle field, starving for water. Another soldier, on the other side came along, and with his scant supply of food and water divided with the dying soldier, and by so doing revived the dying man. Then as his kind benefactor hurried away the revived soldier turned his gun upon him and shot him in the back. Wicked wretch, but that is a picture of those who enjoy God's benefits and refuse to serve Him. We have known some to be such desperate ingrates and traitors that they would actually take God's name in vain. God says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." God have mercy on this mighty horde of so-called men and women (not gentlemen and ladies, for neither of these classes curse) who are constantly blaspheming the holy name of the good God whose blessings they enjoy and despise. So we should be a Christian because it is right.

II. Because it is wrong to serve the devil. This fiend is called the devil, Satan, the Dragon and other such horrible names. He is the enemy of God and man. In the parable of the sower (Luke 8: 12) where Jesus speaks of the seed sown by the wayside we read, "Then cometh the devil." He is the same determined, resourceful enemy. He hates God and His creatures. God planted a garden in Eden, but the devil came and wrecked it. God chose Israel as His peculiar nation, but the devil came and Israel set God aside and He left them. For 400 years, from Malachi till Jesus, the heavens were brass. All communication cut off. No voice or angelic visit from God to man. Then the church was established. The early Christians were full of faith and the Holy Ghost. But they compromised, left their first love till the centuries called "The Dark Ages" came. Then God raised up such mighty warriors as Luther and Wesley. Again light broke and multitudes were saved in the good old-fashioned way. But now, while God has a host of devout souls, the apostasy of the last days, in full swing, seems to be upon us. Christ said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer." Now often the professed church is turned into a place of entertainment. Fairs, feasts, socials and even dances in the professed church. Christ calls it a "Synagogue of Satan." All of this is the diabolical work of the devil. He would wreck every nation, home and life and damn all in hell. And, sad to say, we are marching under the white flag of heaven or the black flag of hell. We are following God or the devil. There is no neutral ground. So we should be Christians because it is wrong to serve the devil.

III. Because of influence. We should be a Christian now because of our influence. Mr. Webster says, Influence is power whose operation is invisible." All have influence. Every one is making it easier for some one else to go to heaven or hell. A man walks along the crest of the mighty Alps and sets in motion a small piece of snow or ice. As this small piece rushes down the mountain side it gains in volume and in velocity, gets larger and travels faster. Soon it becomes a mighty avalanche, and falls upon the village at the base of the mountain and crushes out the lives of many. So it is with influence, either good or bad. A good word may be spoken or a good deed committed and it will deepen and widen till it breaks on the shores of eternity and a multitude are blest. Just so with evil influence. So we should be Christians now because of influence.

IV. Because of the fearfulness of sin. Sin is the most dreadful and dangerous things in the universe. It is worse than hell. If there had been no sin there would have been no hell. Sin made hell a necessity. Hell is the penitentiary of the universe. Heaven is quarantined against sin. Hell, or the Lake of Fire, is the ultimate doom of Satan and sinners. Sin is more poisonous than carbolic acid. It is more deadly than poisonous gas. It is more dangerous than rattle snakes and dynamite. It

is sin that wrecks, ruins and damns. It is the cause of every tear. It has dug every grave. In the eyes of the world nothing is wrong any more. The poet said, "Sin is a monster of such frightful mien, as to be dreaded is but to be seen; but seen too often, familiar with its face, we first endure, then pity, then embrace." That is about where we are now. We have seen sin till we have gotten use to it. We are told of Lieutenant Becker, whose business it was to take prisoners from the court over to Sing Sing prison. One day he, while at the prison, became greatly interested in the electric chair. After having sat in it and examined it carefully, as he looked at it, he said, "One thing is sure, old chair, you will never get me." But, while he was a fine moral man, he was not a Christian. Sin is treacherous. You can never tell what it will do. The lieutenant went back and continued his work. A few months went by and a fearful crime was committed. An old lady, who was very wealthy, was robbed and murdered. Not a trace of the murderer could be found. But it was learned that about that time the lieutenant bought a fine home, purchased an elegant car. His bank account suddenly became very large. He was suspected. Soon the crime was laid at his door and he confessed to the fearful deed. He was tried and sentenced to die in the electric chair. A trip was made to Sing Sing. But all was reversed. Lieutenant Becker was the prisoner. Again he sat in the same chair. This time it was not "make believe." It was real. The current was turned on and the lieutenant was ushered into eternity. The old chair got him. Yes, we should be Christians now because of sin.

V. Because of the love of Christ. When we remember how Jesus came to this old world and suffered and died for us we feel from the bottom of our hearts that we should love and serve Him. He became the poorest of the poor. He said, "The birds of the air have nests, and the foxes of the earth have holes, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Then we behold His life of devoted toil and sacrifice. Finally He was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter and forsaken by all. They drove the cruel nails through His hands and feet and crucified Him between two thieves. They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall. They mocked Him when dying. For six long hours He hung on the cross. From nine till three. The sun went down at noon and for three long hours He suffered in the dark and finally died. He did this not for His friends but for His enemies. "While we were yet sinners." Matchless, boundless love. The poet said, "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made, and every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade; to write the love of God abroad, would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky." The man was kneeling in the cemetery weeping. Some one came along and asked why he wept. He replied, "During the Civil War when they were conscripting soldiers, I was drafted. My wife and children were sick. It seemed if I left home they would die. I had a friend, not quite old enough for the draft law, and he took my place. He became my substitute. He was killed and is buried here. This is his grave. He took my place. He died for me and I am alive because he is dead. When I think of what he did for me it makes me weep." Yes, he was grateful and appreciative. It is basely wicked to reject and fail to appreciate the love of Christ. God the Father gave His Son and Christ came and died for us. We should be Christians because of the love of Christ.

VI. Then, finally, we should be Christians now because it will soon be too late. Our text says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found and call upon him while he is near." This clearly implies that there will come a time when He cannot be found and He will not be near. Men seem to think that they can go on and live in sin and serve the devil as long as they like and if they ever decide to come to Christ they will find an open door. This is a delusion of Satan to damn souls.

God opens doors and God closes doors. In the Bible we read of Noah and the ark. Noah was a preacher of righteousness and through him God warned the wicked. But they paid no heed, and there came a time when mercy ended. God said to Noah, "Come into the ark." And then we read, "The Lord shut him in." A door shuts out and a door shuts in. The same door that shut Noah in shut the others out. Then we read for forty days and nights the rain came. Incessantly, unceasingly the rain poured down. The hills were covered and the tops of the mountains were covered. Doubtless that wicked throng came, as the waters rose, to the ark and sought admittance. Possibly children reproached their parents and said, "O why did you not take us into the ark when Noah entreated us?" But too late now. The door was shut. Christ is our ark. There was just one ark. There is just one Saviour. All were drowned in the flood who refused to enter the ark. All will be damned who refuse to come to Christ. He is the only Saviour. He said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." He that would climb up any other way is a thief and a robber." There is only one supreme sacrifice. That was made by Christ. The Japs and Germans and even our own boys may be taught by impostors and deceivers that to give their lives for their country will insure them a passport into heaven. But not so. That is a lie from the pit to damn. Those who teach this are thieves and robbers. They will steal heaven from you and rob you of the salvation of your soul. Yes, Jesus is the one and only Saviour.

It is said that a young man in Ohio committed a fearful crime. His old mother went to Governor Nash and begged for a pardon for her son. She said, "Governor, he is my only boy. I am a widow. I am not asking for justice, but for mercy. Do what you can, not for his sake but for mine." The governor was touched by the plea of the poor, old mother. He promised her to investigate the case and see if anything could be done. He went to the prison where the young man was awaiting the day of his execution. The young man saw the governor coming, and not knowing him and thinking him to be a minister who had come to talk to him, said to the warden, "Warden, I see one of those preachers coming. I do not wish to see him and you tell him so." But the governor came and called to the young man and said, "Come here, Charlie, I have a word I want to say to you." But Charlie was sullen and angry and replied, "I do not wish to see you." But the governor said, "But you might be interested." To this Charlie replied, "I told you I did not want to see you and will you please go on." The governor said, "Very well, I will," and he turned and left. Then the warden, who had stepped aside, returned and said, "Charlie, how did Governor Nash and you make it?" Then, when he learned it was the governor, he fell upon the concrete floor and wailed like a lost and damned soul, "Oh, I have insulted the only man who could save my life."

Life is brief. Our little day will soon be gone. We make a fight to live here, but it is a losing fight. All have lost and we must lose. But there is a better world than this. It is called heaven. If there were a place in this old world where we would never get sick or die we would all long to go, but there is no such place in the vast domain of this world. We would cross the seas, climb the mountains and crawl to reach that happy, permanent home. But while there is no such abode here there is just such a place. And heaven is a place. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you." Hell is also a place. The rich man so testified. He was concerned about his brothers, "Lest they come into this place of torment." Heaven is a day without a night and hell is a night without a day. If we miss heaven we miss it all. May we seek the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near. He said, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." May we call before it is eternally too late.

* * *

THE DEADLINE

There is a time, we know not when,
A place, we know not where,
Which marks the destiny of men,
For glory or despair.

There is a line, by us unseen,
Which crosses every path;
It is God's boundary between
His patience and His wrath.

To cross that limit, is to die,
To die as if by stealth,
It may not pale the beaming eye,
Or quench the glowing health.

But on that forehead, God has set,
Indelibly a mark,
By man unseen, for man as yet,
Is blind and in the dark.

He feels, he says, that all is well,
That every fear is calmed,
He lives, he dies, he wakes in hell,
Not only doomed, but damned.

How long may men go on in sin?
How long will God forbear?
Where does hope end where begin,
The confines of despair?

One answer from the skies is given,
Ye who from God depart;
While it is called "today" repent,
And harden not your heart.

* * * * *

07 -- CHOICE, HEAVEN OR HELL GAINED BY IT

In the Book of Joshua, the 24th chapter and the 15th verse, you will find these words:
"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." These words, as you know, were spoken by Joshua. Mr.
Webster says, "Choice is the voluntary power of selecting." This is a simple definition. Not

involuntary power but voluntary. "Choose ye." Choice is a marvelous thing. If we could open Heaven tonight, and see the host of glorious beings, and ask them why they were there, they would respond, "We are here because we made a right choice." It seems to me that if we could open the doors of the damned, and behold the poor miserable occupants of that world, and ask them why they are there, a chorus of voices, like distant thunder would answer, "We are here because we made a wrong choice." A right choice means Heaven, and a wrong choice means Hell.

There have been many tragedies in this lost world, but the parent tragedy was the worst; that took place in the garden of Eden, the beautiful, holy home prepared by the Lord for His holy children. God gave them two laws -- a positive and a negative law. The positive law was that they dress the garden and keep it. The negative law was, "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But the devil, that subtle, cunning being that hates God and hates you, came and said, "Ye shall not die." And they believed the devil rather than God. The devil also said, "Ye shall be as gods;" but such gods as they were. They became cowardly, cringing criminals. Sin will make fools out of us. Sin made Adam and Eve believe that they could hide themselves from an omniscient God among the trees of the garden. Truly a tragic loss -- they lost so much. They lost fellowship with God; they lost their relationship with God. The biggest lie out of hell is that sin will sever fellowship but not relationship. No, sin severs fellowship and, moreover, sin severs relationship. When Lucifer fell he lost his fellowship and also his relationship. When Adam and Eve fell they lost their fellowship and also their relationship. It was a tragic loss. They lost their fellowship, lost their relationship, lost their peace, lost their rest, lost their home, lost God. But one thing survived the fall, and that was choice. Aren't you glad? Adam and Eve suffered tragic loss, but they could still choose. Thank God, we can choose.

But when does temptation become sin, if it does become sin? of course, there is no sin in temptation. If there were, Jesus was the greatest sinner who ever lived, for the devil tempted Him to the most diabolical sin, and that was to worship the devil. I would rather steal, lie, or get drunk than worship the devil. So, while there is no sin in temptation, temptation may be the avenue to sin. But now the question is, when does temptation become sin, in case it does? It is when one yields to temptation. Eve saw the tree, desired the fruit and finally partook. She saw the tree was good to the taste, it was good to look at, and would make one wise; but the question is, when did she sin? When she saw, when she desired, or when she took? You say it was when she partook. No, it was just before she partook, it was when she made the fatal decision.

Take Achan, for example. He saw that good Babylonish garment, he desired it, and then he took it. But when did Achan sin? Not when he saw or desired, necessarily, but when he made the fatal choice. He made the choice and then took. A boy goes down the road, who hasn't had an apple for a month. There is quite an affinity between a boy's stomach and red apples; and the boy sees those apples and desires them, but he has not necessarily sinned yet. But when does he sin, in case he does? You say, "It is when he gets over the fence." No, it is just before he gets over the fence; it is when he makes the fatal choice. If he remembers that God says, "Thou shalt not steal," and thus resists the devil and makes a right choice he comes out a victor.

These are strenuous days, but I would seek to help you at the risk of being misunderstood. We think the most damning sin of the age is the nude craze. Jesus said, "Whosoever looketh (looks

and keeps looking) on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." -- Matt. 5:28. As already suggested, the sin is not necessarily in the seeing or in the desire, but in making the fatal decision. The essence of almost all temptation is to satisfy a right desire in a wrong way. Every onslaught of the devil in the temptation of Jesus was to induce Him to satisfy a right desire in a wrong way. Think of these! A young man, saved and sanctified, may come in contact with one of these nude vixens, vamps, and the enemy may tempt him; but if he resists the devil and the vamp, he comes out victorious.

This brings us directly to our subject:-- Choice. We would notice for our lesson three Bible characters -- one who made a wrong choice and two who made a right choice. We will take the one who made the wrong choice first -- Lot by name. In the Book of Genesis we read of the choice that Lot made. As you know, he was Abraham's nephew, and they were both rich in cattle, silver, and gold. There was a strife between the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot; and Abraham said, "Let there be no strife between us, for we are brethren." Then Abraham said, "If you go to the left, I will go to the right; or if you go to the right, I will go to the left." Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the well-watered plains of Jordan -- he saw them, and desired them. Steps to Sodom: he saw the plains, he desired them, he pitched his tent toward Sodom, and then took up his abode in Sodom. I don't think Lot meant to become so Sodomized as he did; but you can never tell how far one will go when he starts on the toboggan slide to hell. Lot made his fatal choice, but why did he make it? Because of spiritual advantage? No, his motives were worldly and selfish.

Just a word relative to Abraham's statement about their being brethren. Abraham said, in substance, "The Canaanite is in the land, and if we believe in the true God and have strife between us, the unbelievers will not have much faith in our religion." So it is today; if those of us who profess holiness have strife among ourselves, it will be hard to convince outsiders of the genuineness of old-fashioned, second-blessing holiness. But we are to notice two things concerning Lot: first, what he gained: and second, what he lost.

* * *

What He Gained

Doubtless, he gained a great deal. He obtained the well-watered plains of Jordan; doubtless, large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep. And no doubt he gained much in Sodom. Maybe he was the mayor of the city, for when the angels came he sat in the gates of the city. That was a place where the principal man sat. No doubt he had a fine home and great prestige in Sodom. Probably his wife and daughters were prominent in all the social activities of the city. There are temporary pleasures in sin. Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." So doubtless Lot gained quite a bit by this choice.

* * *

What He Lost

First of all, he lost fellowship with Abraham. It must have been a great privilege to gather around the smoking altar with Abraham, but he forgot all of this. Thank God for the fellowship of God's people. I am going to stay with them if they will let me; if not, I am going to stay anyhow! They have me on their hands.

"Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love...

"We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear."

But Lot lost all of this.

Second, he lost all he had gained of a material nature in Sodom. If he had a fine home, that was consumed in the conflagration upon Sodom. He lost all of his material possessions.

Third, he lost the respect of his family. I have heard people say, "I do not care what people think about me." Well, I do. I think what they mean is that they would rather please God than please anyone on earth. If that is what they mean, then I can say "Amen" to it. You say, "If you stand for the good old-fashioned way of Bible holiness they will put you out." Well, if they do, I will still be in. John was banished to the Isle of Patmos for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. He was out, but was still in. I would rather be on Patmos, excommunicated, hearing what John heard and seeing what John saw, than to be pastor of the First Church, a time-serving, compromising hireling. But Lot lost the respect of his family.

You remember that two angels came to Sodom that evening. We might pause just a moment here and notice the angels are male. There are no lady angels. But I see a rather inquisitorial look on a lady's face. Now, ladies, don't be discouraged; we are not angels and will never be, as angels are a different order of beings from human beings. Angels were created before the human race. So you make it to Heaven just the same, if you are true. Did you ever notice that all the pictures of angels you ever saw are either women or babies? But all this is wrong. The angels are all male. My wife says no one could ever imagine a man being an angel! But these two angels came to Sodom to look the situation over -- to see if conditions in Sodom corresponded with the cry that came up to Heaven. Lot retained some of that spirit of hospitality which he had gotten, no doubt, from his Uncle Abraham. So he insisted that the angels come in and spend the night with him. They at first refused, but finally consented.

Soon the wicked Sodomites gathered at his home and said, "Bring these men out, that we may know them." We once thought this meant to get acquainted with them, but after more careful study it seems there was another meaning altogether. Many of the old theologians declare that they desired what is now called homosexuality. If you desire to know just what that means read the first chapter of the Book of Romans. Wicked abomination worse than adultery if possible, wrong relationship between members of the same sex. Bring them out that we may know them. Sodomy, horrible, shuddering! Much of that is now breaking out in schools and colleges. Then Lot made that

unmentionable proposition to them, "Permit me to bring my two daughters, who have never known man." This seems to substantiate just what we mentioned above.

Then the angels, or men, who were inside reached out and pulled Lot in and shut the door. Then the angel said, "Have you any here in this city beside your wife and these two daughters? If so, bring them out of this place, for we will destroy the city." Then we see Lot as he slips out his back door, for the mob was at the front door, and he goes to the home of one of his married daughters. He insists that they come with him at once and leave the city, for the judgments of God would soon be falling upon it; but all in vain. Then he goes to the home of another daughter with the same ill effect. "He seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law." Doubtless they felt he had lost his mind. Then we see Lot wending his way back through some dark alley: perhaps, to his home: and we hear him as he wails, "I got them in, but I can't get them out." He had lost the respect of his family.

Yes, the minister or the church may lead their families or members into the world but they cannot get them out. That is the situation too often today. The minister and church may lead their members into all kinds of social functions, fairs, feasts, and entertainments, and then desire to change; but all in vain. They get them in, but can't get them out. Parents may take their children to the down-town show or get the TV show in the home, and find the family becoming slaves to all of this. They may then seek to make a change, but all in vain. They have lost respect.

Fourth, Lot lost his family. Finally, after his unsuccessful attempt to alarm his married daughters, Lot returned to his home, whereupon the angels hastened him, declaring they would burn Sodom. But Lot and his family were loath to leave. Why? Because their treasures were there, and "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." So the angels literally pulled them out. They laid hold of the hand of Lot and of his wife and daughters, and brought them out. Then they gave instructions. Lot and his family were to flee to the mountain, and they were not to stop or look back. But Lot insisted that they could not make it to the mountain. Shame on him! We can do, by the help of God, anything that He commands.

It is said John and Charles Wesley were talking one day, and John said to Charles, "What would you do if God commanded you to fly?" Charles answered, "If God commanded me to fly, I would trust God to give me some wings and then I would fly." Charles was the singer, but John was the theologian. John was not very big, but covered all the ground he stood on. He had backbone -something greatly needed today. So John raised himself up to his full height and said, "Look here, Charles, if God commanded me to fly, I would fly, wings or no wings." So it is, for whatever God commands He furnishes grace. God tells us to be clean, be holy, be ready for death or for the Lord's coming.

But we read that Lot's wife looked back. She did not go back, but simply looked back, and the judgment of God fell upon her, and she was turned into a pillar of salt. A wrong look may damn us. No wonder Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife." Finally, Lot and his two daughters came to a cave and entered. God said mountains, but they stopped in a cave. Sad, sordid things took place in this cave. We may expect calamity when we refuse to go on with God. Lot was drunk, and his two daughters were in the way of motherhood by their father. Incest. Would God they were dead.

Yes, Lot lost a great deal. He lost fellowship with Abraham, and lost all he had gained in a material way-burned in Sodom. He lost the respect of his family, lost his family, and lost God. In the New Testament, we read of "that righteous man" Lot; but anyone who can disobey God and be drunk in a cave must have lost out. Tragic loss. It was a bad choice that Lot made! Now we will glance at two men who made a right choice.

The first is Abraham. After Lot had gone, no doubt Abraham felt rather lonely, he missed his nephew. But we read in Gen. 13:14-17 that the Lord came and spoke to Abraham. We can afford to lose anything or anybody if God will still communicate with us. In verse 14, we read: "The Lord said to Abraham after that Lot was separated from him. Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art." Not from the place where he once was, not from the place where he would like to be, but from the place where he was at that moment. Encouraging! Then he said, "Arise, and walk through the land, and behold the stars of heaven, and I will make thy posterity as numberless as the stars." Abraham no doubt took quite a walk. It is said that the Indians proposed to give William Penn, for a few dollars and a few trinkets, all the land that he or some of his associates could walk around in a certain number of days. So they walked for days and days and finally returned, having marked out the State of Pennsylvania; and the Indians said, "White man make big walk." Certainly! There was walking inspiration, they were walking around the rich fields and mountains full of minerals. So Abraham no doubt "made big walk."

Then we see Abraham in the plains of Mamre, sitting in his tent door in the cool of the day. And he beheld three men coming; so Abraham ran to meet them and gave them a most gracious invitation to stop with him. They accepted; who could refuse such hospitality? When entering, they asked, "Where is Sarah thy wife?" Abraham responded, "She is in the tent." Tragic if an angel should inquire of some of the brethren where their wives are now. Often they would answer, "I do not know; the last time I saw her, she had her cigarettes, and had donned her trousers or shorts, and was on her way to the city. She was running for magistrate, she may have gotten elected." But we will get off of that!

Abraham ran and brought a calf, fresh and good, and had one of his young men to dress it, and Sarah made cakes on the hearth. And Abraham served Jesus and the two angels a wonderful meal. Sometimes it is asked, "Can we eat in Heaven?" Well, for your encouragement I think so, for Jesus ate after His resurrection, and if some folks thought they could not eat in Heaven they would let up in their race and not make another effort! But Abraham served a sumptuous repast-veal, cakes, cooked by Sarah on the hearth, and butter. Sarah was a real cook, she was no flapper. Abraham said, "I will set a morsel before you" A whole calf, cakes, and butter Abraham called a "morsel." Webster says a morsel is "a small bite." It would be nice to take a full meal with Abraham.

Then the two angels left, but the Lord tarried with Abraham. And the Lord began to reveal to Abraham the purpose of these heavenly visitors. They had come down to check up on Sodom, and see if existing conditions corresponded with the cry that came up to Heaven. Doubtless Abraham was thinking of his much-loved nephew Lot in Sodom. So Abraham drew near and stood yet before the Lord, and here we have that most wonderful intercessory prayer recorded. It is found in Gen. 18:23-33. Abraham said, "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou destroy and not spare the place for

the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the Lord said, If I find fifty righteous within the city then I will spare all the place for their sakes." Then Abraham said: "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous." God was leading Abraham. but Abraham was also a born psychologist. He did not say, If there be forty-five righteous, but said, If it lacks five of the fifty. And the Lord said, "If this number be found, we will spare the entire city." Then Abraham said, "Peradventure there should be forty righteous;" and the Lord said, "I will not do it if forty righteous be found." Then Abraham said, "There may be thirty righteous ones in Sodom;" and the Lord said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." And then Abraham said, "It may be that only twenty righteous will be found there." And the Lord said, "I will not do it for twenty's sake." And Abraham said, "Oh, let not the Lord be angry with me, and I will speak but this once; Peradventure ten righteous shall be found there;" and the Lord said, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." Doubtless Abraham thought that with Lot and his family surely there would be ten righteous, and so we read: "Abraham left off speaking to the Lord." Some criticize Abraham for ceasing his prayer, but we think he was praying in the Holy Ghost and that was as far as the Holy Ghost would permit him to go. We can pray effectively only as the Holy Ghost inspires the prayer. Wonderful choice Abraham made!

The second man we notice who made a right choice is Moses. It is said Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Sin does afford temporary pleasure, but at last it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Moses lived a hundred twenty years, and his life was most eventful. There were three periods of forty years each in the life of Moses. The first forty were spent in Pharaoh's court, the second forty as a shepherd feeding the flock, and the last forty he was pastor of that Israelitish church. Here we have great sympathy for Moses and, in one sense, if you will forgive me, I'll say I have a little something on Moses. He was pastor for forty years, but I exceeded Moses by two years, being pastor forty-two years. So I have great respect for Moses as pastor of that murmuring crowd. He simply could not calm them down. He would get them pacified and satisfied, and they would break out in a new place. They may have been Wesleyan Methodist, Pilgrim Holiness, or Free Methodist, but I am inclined to think they were largely Nazarenes!

On one occasion water was scarce, and they murmured, and the Lord said to Moses, "Smite the rock." This Moses did, and water came forth. Some time later they were again murmuring about water, and the Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the rock." But Moses was provoked, and he smote the rock twice. The Lord gave water, but was greatly grieved with Moses. Moses was impatient, angry.

But you ask, "Why was he angry with Moses for smiting the rock the second time?" That is easily answered. The rock typified Jesus. He is our Rock, and Jesus is not to be smitten twice; He has been crucified, and we must not crucify Him afresh. But the Lord said to Moses, "You shall not be permitted to enter Canaan, because you failed to sanctify, or glorify, me at the rock." This greatly grieved Moses, and he continually spoke to the Lord about permitting him to enter Canaan. But one day the Lord said, "Speak to me no more about this matter, it is settled." Poor Moses, after dealing with that crowd so long. You know there were times when neither the Lord nor Moses

would own that murmuring, fussing crowd The Lord would say, "Moses, they are thy people," but Moses would respond, "No, Lord, they are Thine whom Thou hast brought out of Egypt."

But the Bible says, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." --Psa. 37:4. The Bible makes it clear that every Holy Ghost desire of the human heart shall be satisfied somewhere. "Say not God hath not heard thy prayer, for thou shalt have thy desire sometime, somewhere." Many are the unsatisfied desires of God's saints in this world, but do not be discouraged. Many have a hard time keeping the wolf from the door. Take depression days for example, but do not be discouraged. If we are true we shall one day walk on golden streets, not gold-paved streets, but pure solid gold. The old woman who had been compelled to stint in about everything one day saw the ocean, and as she beheld the gigantic, rolling waves, she cried out hilariously, "Thank God for one thing there is plenty of." So in Heaven there will be no stinting, but an abundance of everything.

Some have longed for Christian fellowship, and have been compelled to dwell with lions, and hyenas. I mean lions and hyenas with two feet, but they roar and scream. But one day, if we are true, in that heavenly world we shall have Abraham, Daniel, Paul, Peter, and a host of all ages for neighbors. Wonderful fellowship! Some long for rest, but never find it in this world. Charles Wesley sang:

"There I shall bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast."

Be nice to take a bath, not in a tub or even in the lake, but in the sea of heavenly rest. Job said, "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest." The hymnist sang:

"In the Christian's home in Glory
There remains a land of rest,
There my Savior's gone before me
To fulfill my soul's request"

Thank God for the land of rest. Every problem solved, every burden lifted, every tear wiped away. Home, Home to stay.

A final glance at Moses. He certainly desired to go to Canaan, but was not permitted. But some hundreds of years later he was present at the transfiguration of Jesus. This occurred over toward the middle of Canaan. And we read, "There were Moses and Elias." Moses had finally arrived in his desired land. He had to go around by the way of Heaven to get this desire satisfied, but it was finally done. So with us in this world -- we may die, or Jesus may come in person, and we may meet Him with many unsatisfied desires; but never mind, they will all be realized somewhere.

Thank God for Abraham and Moses who made right choices. May we not, like Lot, make a wrong choice and possibly be wrecked in time and in eternity; but may we, by the grace of God,

like Abraham and Moses, make a right choice which will ultimately mean a home in Heaven. And the most glorious aspect of Heaven is its eternity. It will never end.

"When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun."

And we shall praise Him through this endless eternity that we made a right choice. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Soon it will be too late to choose.

* * * * *

THE END