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HIS WILL FOR US
By Howard Vassar Miller

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A PICTURE OF HOWARD VASSAR MILLER INCLUDED

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FOREWORD

Humanity's persistent opposition to and evasion of essential character is an evidence of moral perversion. Man's frantic effort to build a satisfactory philosophy has ranged all the way from an agnostic denial of the possibility of human understanding and consequent accountability to belief in various evolutionary tenets and salvation through his own efforts.

But the strangest mark of all in this moral perversity is the studied effort upon the part of many evangelicals to deny God's call to holy character. The mere mention of holiness as a possibility here and now in harmony with God's own essential holiness and as an actual basis for personal experience and genuine fellowship with Deity rouses strong and sometimes bitter opposition; and this in face of the consistent challenge in the Scriptures to experiential holiness in type, symbol, and direct command. To postpone purity to another state, or superficially to claim that the righteousness of Christ covers our unrighteousness, merely begs the question. This strange perversity is seen also in the simple fact that many good men have been able to teach clearly the plan and purpose of God from nearly every angle of revelation until the challenge to present holiness is met. At that point their thinking and interpretation suddenly became cloudy and inconsistent.

In spite of all that has been written and said to the contrary, the Bible clearly teaches that God's will for us in this present world is redeeming grace that actually establishes holiness of heart and life here and now. It is the purpose of the following pages to discuss H's Will for Us as we live in this present world.

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01 -- THE BEAUTY OF HIS WILL

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness (Psalms 96:9).

Beauty is a word that carries some meaning to nearly everyone. Most people possess a measure of appreciation for beauty whether it be that of color, sound, or form. The majestic beauty of nature provokes a thrill in the traveler. One is frequently asked which part of the country is most beautiful, the East or the West. When one gazes upon the awesome splendor of the mighty Rockies as their barren pinnacles pierce the sky of blue, he is awed by the magnificence that fills his vision. When one drives through the narrow valleys of New England and looks at the green-verdured hills and mountains, he wonders if any other part of the world can be so entrancing. It all speaks of the almost indescribable beauties of nature.

To sit in the presence of some great symphony orchestra and listen to the intermingling of melody and harmony inspires the deepest of human emotions. There may be no technical understanding nor critical appreciation of that which is being played; yet the soul is thrilled with the sheer beauty of sound.

The tragedy is that man's appreciation of beauty ceases with the natural. Sin has so warped his moral faculties and dimmed his spiritual perception that appreciation of anything beyond the sensuous and physical is lacking. Yet his very ability to sense material beauty implies a capacity for appreciation beyond that which the five senses can perceive. And this is no mere conjecture; for, whenever man's moral nature is restored by Christ's redemptive power, his appreciations reach beyond the levels of the sensuous. His nature now thrills to beauties that are not sensed by the body alone.

It is true that often he deceives himself through soulish ecstasy. He listens to the melodies of the organ in the sanctuary; he stands awed before great architecture; he responds to the chanting of the robed choir and the moving ritual, and fancies himself spiritual and religious. It is but a more subtle evasion of the unredeemed human in an abortive effort to compensate his latent sense of moral beauty with the merely soulish and sensuous. The truth is that man instinctively resents moral beauty because it reveals his own debased moral nature.

Who has not seen the common caricature of that tall, sallow-complexioned chap with high black hat, umbrella, long black coat, hooked inquisitive nose, seeking out and condemning everything that offends his pious pretense? Here is no casual personification. Rather it is a studied and persistent effort by either word or picture deliberately and intelligently to scorn whatever challenges man's sinful desires and inclinations.

But there is a recognized moral beauty in spite of the seeming paradox involved and man's antipathy toward all that it implies. David, the poet and singer of Israel, under divine inspiration, sings of it in his psalm when he cries, "O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth." The beauty to which David refers here is limited to character, for it is moral

beauty; and only God and man, His creature, are moral beings. Some might claim that the beauty to which David refers is found in God alone; but this is quite clearly not the truth, for only like appreciates like. As Paul puts it in his letter to Titus, "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15). Should it refer to God alone, it would be impossible for man to worship a holy God whose being is the very essence of purity. The clear inference of the appeal is for the personal possession of the beauty of holiness so that man may find it possible to worship and love his Creator in the beauty of holiness.

But to understand in any wise the meaning of such moral beauty is difficult, especially in view of man's own stubborn prejudices. Obviously the only approach to such an understanding would have to be through the natural, which he can grasp and evaluate. So we will try to define the beauty of holiness in some limited measure through the use of natural analogies which are readily understood.

Beauty implies symmetry or balance. This is true whether it be in poetry, music, painting, or sculpture. Beauty reveals itself in poetry by meter. Music evidences this beauty by its legitimate forms and sequences. Painting portrays beauty in perspective and balance, while sculpture presents beauty in actual form and symmetry. Likewise, beauty revealed in its moral aspect in human character must have its evidences of symmetry and balance. The personality and life, to be morally appealing, must possess moral qualities in proportion. Otherwise the life is warped and unlovely. Many people reveal some admirable qualities in their lives, only to neutralize those very good characteristics by the absence of others. The absence of these very necessary qualities causes people to forget the good traits of character.

Thus, without holy character piety easily degenerates into sanctimoniousness; righteousness soon deteriorates into legalism; patience readily becomes mere stoicism; charity sinks to sickening sentimentality; emotions, uncontrolled by a holy heart, are swept into hysteria; boldness becomes reckless presumption; enthusiasm degenerates into fanaticism; and discretion, into cowardice. Man in his own moral right is totally void of moral balancing power. He is easily swept by every wind of influence and extreme. The beauty of holiness means that one's being must be so utterly controlled by the Holy Spirit that symmetrical and balanced character will result.

But beauty involves more than balance. It means completeness as well. To the artist, beauty is absent unless the supposed revelation of beauty involves completeness. On a trip to Mexico City a few years ago, we purchased a beautiful picture of historic Mount Popocatepetl. It is a picture of beauty because of its photographic completeness. In the foreground, forming a frame for the majestic sweep of scene, are the towering pines. Close at hand are details of grass and branch in light and shadow. In the near view is the beautiful sweep of valley with contour of landscape bringing within the range of vision richness of detail. And far yonder in the background is the breathtaking summit of the rugged, snow-capped mountain where, legend tells us, lies the sleeping maiden loved by the Aztec chief. The picture, a thing of beauty because of its completeness, hangs on our living room wall.

The story often has been told of the music student who wanted to tantalize the master during the midnight hours. He stole from his bedroom to the organ and played a familiar score almost

through, leaving the last chord unplayed. Slipping back to his own room, he waited. It was not long before he heard mutterings and movement from the room of his teacher. Soon the master appeared in slippered feet and robe as he fumbled his way to the organ and played the last haunting chord and then returned to his bed.

Moral beauty also implies completeness. The life will manifest a fullness, a totality of living. There will be a generosity of Christian completeness that will mark the individual who knows the experiential reality of worshipping God in the beauty of holiness.

Rhythm is perhaps a more obscure characteristic of beauty, but it is always present where beauty exists. There is rhythm in painting, in poetry, in sculpture, in music. Regardless of the form of beauty, rhythm will always be found. One is reminded by way of a negative illustration of the awkward, embarrassed, boyish attempt at recitation. With clumsy posture and nervous, hesitating speech the lad agonizes through his piece, a caricature of all that is implied in rhythm.

All the created world moves with rhythm. The very stars in the sky above, the sun in its orbit, the moon, the planets-all alike move with a predestined rhythm, producing a marvelous universe in which limitless space is filled with an unbelievable rhythm. Our very physical beings were made to move with rhythm. The beating of the heart, the intoning of the voice, the movement of the body, all alike betray the rhythmical genius of the God of creation.

And so when the human personality is freed from the discordance and abnormality of sin, the whole being finds for the first time a personal synchronization with the very rhythm of the universe. Every twinkling star, every moving planet, every beating heart has suddenly come into a personal unison. The person who has learned the secret of worshipping God in the beauty of holiness finds his inner being swelling with exultation as he feels the song of the Eternal in all about him. It is the beauty of holiness.

But beauty also demands harmony. This part must be rightly related with that, each with the other, so that the relationship of every part blends into a harmonious whole. Thus beauty demands harmony, whether it be in the cold marble of the statue or the warm richness of human personality. The beauty of holiness implies genuine, deep harmony of relationship between the human personality and God. It is a relationship begun when His Spirit witnesses with our spirit. It is a relationship that comes to a fuller issue when the prayer of Jesus is answered in our lives: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: I in them, and thou in me, that they maybe made perfect in one.' . ." (John 17:21-23). It is a relationship that continues with increasing intimacy over the years, whereby the beauty of holiness as revealed in the fellowship between human and divine personality becomes increasingly rich and satisfying.

The beauty of holiness, after all, is the highest form of beauty knowable to man. This is so because it is a beauty related to the highest form of life -- man, the crowning glory of God's creation. It has its source and perfection in the eternal God of holiness. Alexis Carrel in his Nobel Prize book, *Man the Unknown*, has put it aptly:

In modern civilization individuals whose conduct is inspired by a moral ideal are seldom encountered. However, such individuals still exist. We cannot help but notice their aspect as we

meet them. Moral beauty is an exceptional and very striking phenomenon. He who has contemplated it but once never forgets its aspects. This form of beauty is far more impressive than the beauty of nature and science. It gives to those who possess it a strange and inexplicable power. It increases the strength of intellect. It establishes peace among men. Much more than science, art, and religious rites, moral beauty is the basis of civilization.

Here is God's supreme challenge to His creature, His will for us, that we should come into such actual experiential relationship with himself that we can in reality worship Him in the beauty of holiness. Here is a beauty, not of inanimate quality, not a beauty granted His creatures arbitrarily, but a beauty that man, creature of will and intelligence, can possess and which will identify him with his God, bringing glory and praise to the One who made him.

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02 -- THE REALITY OF HIS WILL

For this is the will of God, even your sanctification (I Thessalonians 4:3).

In the Foreword for these chapters we said that there is a consistent challenge to holiness in type, symbol, and direct command. Here is a statement by Paul to the Thessalonian church which, with its legitimate background of truth and collateral scriptures, illustrates this fact. Herein is implied the will of God to men. In a sense it is symbolical, but in a more fundamental sense it is actual and truly experiential.

How few people are aware that God actually did make a will! The will He made in the interest of man is, in the finest sense, as real, as bona fide, as any will ever probated in any court of man. And the specific intent of this will is clear and unmistakable. God has made absolutely clear His design for man. Its intent is so clear and its purpose so explicit that the figure of a

God actually wills to man His own personal holiness. It is His clear purpose that through the redemptive scheme man may once more be restored to the moral image given him in the beginning. And the significance of it all is that it is a restoration, not for another age or dispensation, but for men in this present day. One cannot read the setting of this Thessalonian letter without seeing the implied tense. It is God's purpose that we may NOW enjoy the blessings of redemptive purpose. It is NOW that we may possess the basic benefits of His will conceived before the foundation of the world. It is God's will that we should NOW be the recipients of the provisions of His will.

And, after all, what can surpass the value and worth of holy character? What greater need is revealed by the failures of men? What possible bestowal by God will more adequately relieve the moral dilemma that humanity has faced from age to age? The logic of a present redemption that is morally thorough and vital is seen in its obvious answer to the major weakness of man. God actually wills, for all who will accept the conditions of His will, the restoration of the moral image within the individual personality, not only in consistence with personal need but likewise in

conformity to His own essential holiness. The greatest bestowment God could possibly make to men would be that of holy character. And this is the unmistakable intent of His will.

To understand the scriptural background for this view of the will of God, we have only to remember the words of the Hebrew letter. In the scripture which follows, the word "covenant" is used in the context; but I remind the reader that the words "covenant," "will," "testament" are synonymous in their spiritual application. Therefore, it is perfectly consistent with good interpretation to use these words in their spiritual sense interchangeably. Hence the word "will," consistent with the present thought, is proper in this context and others which speak of the spiritual fulfillment of the will of God toward man.

Note, then, the statement of the writer: "For if that first covenant [will] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he said, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant [will] with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant [will] that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant [will], and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant [will] that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant [will], he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Hebrews 8:7-13).

Obviously these words were written against a Hebrew background and to Hebrew believers. But they do pertain directly to the spiritual fulfillment of the will of God, for that first covenant or will was done away with in favor of the later covenant or will of grace. And it is the will of grace that brings to us, as well as to God's people of the past, the personal possession of holy character.

The intent of this scripture is plain. God, for reasons we need not mention here, annulled the old will to those who came under the disposition of law and made a new will under the covenant of grace. Men have frequently done the very same thing. For reasons of their own they have destroyed or annulled a will previously made in favor of a new one consistent with existent conditions. And of course the new will takes precedence over the former. And so it is, the very will that brings to man the possibility of holy character is this will of grace which canceled the former one. Remember the words of the writer in the preceding chapter: "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a BETTER testament [will]" (Hebrews 7:22).

To help you see the picture more vividly and to grasp the truth before us, we remind you of the experience of John in the Revelation. You remember that John (in the fifth chapter) was privileged to catch a glimpse of the throne of God in the heavens above. He had just recorded the messages to the churches in Asia Minor and then, according to the scripture, a "door was opened in heaven." As John gazed upon the thrilling scene, suddenly his attention was fixed upon the book in the hand of Him who sat upon the throne. It was a book written within and on the back side,

sealed with seven seals. Immediately upon seeing this book, John's whole being was gripped with strong emotion, for he knew the meaning of it. It was a record of man's lost estate. It spoke of that law, familiar to any Hebrew -- the law of kinsman-redeemership. The law, in brief, was this: If one should lose his property under Jewish law and become a bondsman, one of his own kin could, under certain conditions, buy back the forfeited inheritance, restoring it to the one who originally owned it. And the document which recorded his transaction was written on one side with the statement of mortgage and descriptions pertaining to the estate, while on the reverse side were written the names of the witnesses to the transaction. So here before the very eyes of John was the document which represented man's lost holiness, man's lost estate with God. What disposition would be made of the book? John's entire being was swept by wonderment and concern. As he watched in awe, he heard an angel saying, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" -- the very question that vexed John's mind! With beating heart and tense nerves he waited, but no one answered the angel's query. John felt the hopes of humanity slipping and, crushed by the thought of impending consequences, he fell on his face and wept. But as he wept he felt a touch upon his shoulder, and one spoke to him as he brushed back the tears to see and listen: "Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof" (Revelation 5:5).

Thanks be to God! Jesus Christ came to earth, taking upon himself the likeness of our flesh, that He might become our kin and buy back by redemptive right our lost holiness, our lost walk with God. Crowding himself within the confines of human flesh, He became one with us that He might restore to us, through the will of God, what humanity needs most, holy character. In confirmation of Christ's coming to perfect the will of God, turn to Hebrews 10:7, 9, 10: "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." He came that He might establish or authenticate the new will, which functions today, available to all who choose to come under its provisions.

But before a will is binding, death must fall upon the one who makes the will. This, too, has been completed in the death of Christ upon the cross, and clarified in terms of the will by the apostolic writer again in Hebrews 9:15-17: "For this cause he is the mediator of the new testament [will], that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [will], they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament [will] is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament [will] is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." So Christ not only came to earth and became our kin so that He could redeem us, but went up the rugged side of Golgotha's brow and there gave His life in order that the will of God might become a living document, making available to mankind holiness of life and character.

But this is not all. Jesus himself reminds us of the part that the Holy Spirit, or Attorney of the Skies, plays in the will of God. Jesus, in His attempts to make plain to His disciples the necessity of a spiritual kingdom which must take precedence over the restoration of a material one, spoke to them insistently of His departure. It was almost in vain, at the time, that He tried to tell them of His departure. They could see only the necessity of the immediate restoration of the glories of Israel, long departed. They hoped that by some master stroke or phenomenon He would bring

consternation to the power of the Roman Empire. How, they could not understand; but that such must come was clear to their minds. But Jesus, with quiet insistence, tried to correct their faulty thinking, saying that first He must depart to the Father by the way of the Cross and the Resurrection.

One day as He taught them thus, we hear Him say, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:7, 13, 14). Against the background of our present thinking, Jesus was saying in substance, and in fact, "Fear not, children, I must go away; but if I go, I will send the Lawyer of the Godhead to you. In My absence, if one challenges your right to the will, He will intercede. If you find it difficult to grasp the meaning of the will, remember the Lawyer is with you to make it all clear to you." How glad we are to say that the Lawyer of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, is here now to make clear the will of God to all who deign to seek its provisions! He will come, personally, as the Representative of the Trinity, fulfilling the will of God in the life and making its meaning clear and personal.

But wills are conditional. No less is the will of God. There is a difference, however, which must be noted. In the wills of men conditions are often attached that are unique, based upon some human foible or whim. But not so with the will of God. His will is based upon His own inherent holiness. The will of God for man is inescapably tied into the very holiness of God, as the scripture insists, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD" (Hebrews 12:14).

Too many have conceived of the call to holiness as incidental or secondary, but such is not the case. It is inevitably tied into the redemptive plan because of the nature of God himself. It must be accepted without equivocation as a necessity. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but HE THAT DOETH [accepteth] THE WILL OF MY FATHER which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification . . ." (I Thessalonians 4:3). One cannot afford to be indifferent to the will of God; for-with reverence we say it-the Lawyer is a busy Person, who will not always tarry in response to our whim or notion. But to everyone who will hear God's call to holiness now, the Holy Spirit, as effective Agent and Attorney of the will of God, will come to cleanse, to illuminate, to guide; for there is glorious reality in His will for us.

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03 -- BENEFITS OF HIS WILL -- REST OF SOUL

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

Having explored the Hebrew letter in a small way concerning the will of God for us, we will consider further our general theme from the same book; for in the same letter is strong assurance for all who heed, that inner rest of soul is a part of His will for man.

And what greater blessing could come to men than rest from a world of turmoil? Never in man's hectic history could such a pledge from God be more filled with significance than today. True, the world has always been in turmoil from the very hour that our first parents questioned the integrity of their God. From century to century and from age to age that unrest and turmoil have intensified, in spite of man's denial, until today. In spite of a war to bring peace, the tensions of men and nations are more aggravated than ever. Surely the declaration that God's will for us includes rest in a restless world, inner relaxation in the midst of a society tensed to the snapping point, should bring keen interest and inquiry. And that is the import of this chapter. His will DOES include inner spiritual rest for all who will have it.

But at the outset it must be recognized that this commitment of Deity is a conditional promise. In fact, all promises to men included in God's Word are conditional to man as a finite being; all that God offers must be subject to this limitation. This promise is conditional as to whom it relates, "the people of God." We are immediately reminded of the words of Peter, applicable here, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: which in time past were not a people, BUT NOW ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (I Peter 2:9-10). This promise of rest is to all who have been forgiven of their sins. You who were once alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise, but who have now been brought nigh by the blood of Christ-to you this promise is made. You who now have within your hearts an "Abba, Father," who know that you have passed from death to life and enjoy that certain witness within that you are the children of God-to you this promise pertains.

It would seem superfluous that the clear, scriptural discriminations between the children of God and the children of this world need be argued. Jesus himself, as well as many scriptures in the apostolic writings, confirms this clearly indicated difference. All men are not the children of God in the spiritual sense. Only those whose lives have been transformed by the power of God can consistently claim such a relationship. To be children of God by nature is one thing, but to be children of God in spirit is another. You recall Jesus' rejoinder to His hearers when they protested that they were Abraham's seed and were never in bondage to any man, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:39). Likewise, it can be truthfully said that, if we are the children of our Father in heaven, we will do the works of our Father. So the promise of rest is for the children of God.

But let us go from the specific to the general. God is not pleased to have His world in turmoil. It is by no means His will that this should be a restless world. Indeed, God planned it otherwise. He would have it different now if men would seek His leadership. All the restlessness of the ages finds its cause in a failure to trust the One who created man. He purposed that earth should be a literal Utopia because man obeyed his God and walked in loving obedience. What irony in the current efforts of men to bring rest to a world when unrest is bred in the hearts of men through disobedience to the divine purpose and will! And not until man finds soul rest in the grace of God will rest come to this storm-tossed world.

Let us now endeavor to understand this rest proffered to the children of God. If we would grasp its meaning, we must remember that these words were written against the background of Hebrew thinking, as were the words concerning the will of God. But here the writer has in mind the figure of the Jewish Sabbath. When we understand the meaning of the Sabbath, we can define the rest that remains for the people of God.

The Jewish Sabbath began with the sunset of Friday and continued until the sunset of Saturday. In the interim of those twenty-four sacred hours the entire attention and the heart devotion of the worshiper were set upon his God. In meditation, contemplation, appreciation he worshipped. It was a period of God-centeredness. The blessings of the past week were reviewed, adoration expressed, and vows renewed. In other words, it was a period in which the entire being was professedly centered upon the One from whom all life's blessings issued. Likewise shall our spiritual rest be a continual Sabbath, in which the entire being is centered in the One whom the soul loves. From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same, His name is praised. A spiritual work has been performed within the inner being whereby God becomes the fixed center of personality, resulting in the enjoyment of a continuous Sabbath of spiritual rest. The mind, the heart, the will are perpetually set upon His pleasure and His glory. It is a rest from outward distractions whereby the very necessary actions of life are brought into proper perspective. The relationships of life are fused into harmony with the will and pleasure of Almighty God. Through the adjustments that come in the very core of the being through purity, God consistently holds the focal point of affection.

The rest afforded the people of God strikes deep into the vital reactions of the inner life. This is why His will for us is morally both fundamental and appealing. It is the answer to the very intuitive cry of the nature of man. Would that men could understand how satisfying God's will can be when brought to experiential fruition in the inner life! It is a rest from our own labors. What a rest is this! To be delivered from the ardors of our own puny efforts! To be released from inner restraints that make true devotion often irksome and many times intermittent! A rest where there are no longer wishful strivings and struggles to be what the heart longs to be! But, thank God, there is such a rest in God's will for every one of His children.

Notice how the writer plays upon the very figure of the Sabbath to make this truth clear. "For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. For he that is entered into HIS rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:4, 10). As God completed His own creative efforts and rested on the seventh day, so, declares the writer, we likewise should enter into a spiritual rest or Sabbath wherein we fully cease from our own labors. It means that God has for His children an inner rest of heart where effort becomes conformity and desire reality. It is not a rest of idleness, but one of accommodation to the will of God. It is not a rest of inactivity, but one of full heart conformity with all that the heart understands of the will of God. Nor is there fear for the future. The heart has somehow grasped a new intuition where, as C. W. Ruth used to put it, one has learned never to hold to anything that God may put His hand on because he has learned that there is always something better to take its place. A delightful inner tranquillity has come to the soul because now the heart life has been truly conformed to all the will of God.

The negative aspect of this rest is just as real and assured, for it is a rest from carnal struggles. And this has always been a conspicuous problem in the life of the merely regenerated. It makes no difference whether it is betrayed in carnal anger or shrinking fear. It may be merely a relentless, faultfinding disposition or brutal, inner stubbornness. Regardless of the reactions within, turmoil and restlessness betray the presence of a disposition not fully resting in the will of God. Here is a matter that strikes deep in the disposition of the soul. Resident there, is a condition or quality of nature totally antagonistic to God. Remember the words of Paul, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8: 7). Here is scriptural confirmation of a condition with which all Christians are painfully acquainted. After one has enjoyed the blessedness and joy of release from the guilty past, has had that glorious assurance within that he is now the child of God, sooner or later this disappointing and bewildering fact comes to him. There is something within confusingly opposed to his best desires to serve God fully. Regardless of former instruction or the lack of teaching, his own inner experiences reveal an inner conflict. This conflict is based in the fact that the very virus of sin born in him, from which issued the motivation for all his sinful acts now forgiven, is still within. Some have tried to teach that, when forgiveness is given by God, inner purity is likewise bestowed; but experience, as well as God's Word, tells us otherwise. There still remains within the heart a condition not merely at enmity, but the actual personification of enmity, against the will of God. What a deliverance, then, is ours when His will is performed within and we find that second rest, a rest from carnal strife!

But turn again to the positive. This is a rest of assurance. There is a sense of having arrived, a feeling of consummation, a realization of having at last laid hold of the very heart of spiritual reality. The words of our context describe it, "For we which have believed DO enter into rest... ." (Hebrews 4:3). It is a rest, not only of eternal horizons, but one for us here and now. It surpasses the familiar words of the hymn,

O land of rest, for thee I sigh!
When will the moment come
When I shall lay my armor by,
And dwell in peace at home?

It is a rest that brings an exhilarating sense of present assurance. Too many professing children of God have allowed the very longings for inner rest to become a substitute for this rest of assurance. They have longed for and often sincerely believed in a greater measure of inner assurance than they have ever experienced. But never has this longing become sufficiently importunate and impassioned to drive them to personal extremity in the quest of the rest that should be theirs.

It is likewise a rest of satisfaction. Nothing can plumb the depths of the spirit like purity. Here is the answer to those unnamed, restless longings in every breast. It is rest in the most comprehensive sense that can be known. It is in this relationship that the scripture, "Be careful for nothing," finds its answer. David speaks of this rest in the beloved Shepherd Psalm. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." It is said that sheep will never cease grazing until satisfied. Regardless of conditions about them, they will seek food until completely satisfied. Thus it is the Psalmist describes the soul actually at rest in God.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." So adequately satisfied is the child of God that, even in the midst of pastures lush and tempting, his soul is fully satisfied. Of course this is not in any ultimate sense; but as far as his present spiritual state is concerned, he is completely satisfied. His will, his hopes, his needs are all fully met in the secret of his rest in God.

It would seem that the sheer practicality and beauty of this rest remaining for the children of God would prompt an immediate quest, but too often experience confirms the opposite. Men today spurn God's promises as they did in days that are past. Thus it is that God puts a warning over against this gracious invitation to rest. "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1). For, Paul reminds us, "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:11-12, A.S.V.). This entire context is a reference by Paul to Israel's experience in the wilderness, which forms the background for God's warning to all who read. Redemption's end is not found in forgiveness alone. As God brought His people out of Egyptian bondage in order that He might bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey, so God has brought all who believe out of the bondage of sin in order that He might bring them into a land of spiritual rest. The forgiveness of our sins becomes the glorious threshold and Kadesh from which we, by faith, may step into a land where a glorious present rest remains. Unbelief alone can thwart this certain purpose of God for our lives, just as it did in the actual history of Israel. But if we will believe and follow on into this land of spiritual rest, we will find delight in His will for us.

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04 -- CONDITIONS OF HIS WILL

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:13).

Frequently the point of some scriptural emphasis has been overlooked merely because one did not read far enough in the context. Illustrations of this reason for improper Biblical interpretation are not hard to find. The words of Paul are sometimes freely quoted, "But as it is written, 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 Corinthians 2:9). But the thought does not stop here. To read this verse by itself is to miss the point entirely, for verse ten continues, "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." What a difference this further and necessary reading makes in the context!

Another scripture quite often misinterpreted in the same manner is in Philippians 3:12: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Our Calvinistic friends have sometimes quoted this verse as a final proof against heart cleansing; but they have failed, in their apparent eagerness to find proof text for their point, to read far enough. Just a little farther on, in verse fifteen, we read, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything

ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you." Here again the point is clear. The first quotation by itself could easily be made to mean far more than it really does; but, properly related to the following verses, its meaning is fully clear. In the former verse, the resurrection perfection is referred to; and in the latter, present heart perfection is in the mind of the apostle.

It is thus the context which reveals the conditions of God's will for us, Luke 11:1-13. It is to be admitted that this group of verses is seldom considered as a unit. But, when they are read carefully with this thought in mind, their unity becomes quite apparent. Jesus had just come from the place of prayer. His return and the meaning of it all was clear to His disciples. Thus encouraged they asked, "Lord, teach us to pray . . ." Then it was that Jesus taught them the pattern prayer so common to all and so frequently repeated in concert. But He did not stop with the teaching of this prayer. Taking the immediate situation as the opening for further revelation of truth, He continued with the story of the friend and the three loaves of bread. Then follows the exhortation to ask, to seek, to knock. The climax of His thought follows immediately with the words of the thirteenth verse, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

In this context, then, Jesus clearly makes known the basic conditions for the receiving of the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is His will for every one of His followers. And these conditions are clearly stated. First, there is a recognition of one's need. This is followed by a desperation in quest of this most gracious of all gifts to men. Then comes the necessity of definiteness in asking, climaxing in the context with the certain assurance that the gift will be bestowed.

"And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL" (Luke 11:4). Here Jesus voices the universal cry of the heart of man" -- Deliver us from evil"! Often unrecognized and as often rationalized, yet it is the almost instinctive and universal cry of the human heart. Many of men's doings are an effort to compensate for the abnormality of sin. Man struggles to evade the implications of the acknowledgment of evil. His awkward bunglings to set the world aright without coming to grips with the cause of all the ills of man are pathetically and tragically futile. But the cry persists, "Deliver us from evil."

Neither Marxism nor democracy has the answer. Only the Word of God has the solution-a frank admission of sin and its confession and renunciation. It is pitiful to listen to men with their blind philosophies and human sophistries as they attempt to produce a Utopian world without a Utopian heart. They zealously labor to clean the outside of the vessel, blindly ignoring the filth it contains. Humanity slowly, irresistibly, inevitably drifts nearer and nearer to the rocks of social destruction simply because of the failure to admit sin as the sole source of all the ills of man and thus the failure to solve the problem on this simple basis.

Here, then, is the first condition of God's grace both to man and to society. Man must admit the fact of sin deeply rooted in his very nature. The challenge of truth is first personal and then collective. Any man who would discover for himself the grace of God at its best must come to the full and contrite admission of the fundamental evil of his nature. We cannot attempt a discussion of its source and its passing pollution across the centuries, for neither space nor context permits that. But the stubborn fact remains, sin dwells deep and regnant in the heart of man. It is from this virile

source of evil that evil conduct is born. Every outbroken expression of evil, regardless of its kind, has its rootage in a heart of evil. God offers to forgive these acts of sin when confessed and forsaken; but something more than forgiveness must be offered for the source of evil from which these willful acts sprang. God will forgive us freely by His grace for the deeds for which we are responsible. But something more than forgiveness must be proffered for the sin inherent in our nature for which we are not responsible.

Paul, in his classic argument concerning deliverance from sin, brings to picturesque climax the crisis of it all when he cries, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Here unmistakably portrayed is the utter helplessness of man under the dominion of sin. To many the illustration is familiar. Paul alludes to a grotesque, cruel, Roman custom where certain types of criminals were manacled limb to limb, body to body, face to face, with a dead body. In punishment for their crimes they were compelled to carry about this dead body until its corruption brought death to their own. Repulsive and loathsome, yet none too highly colored, is this picture in view of the deep, death-dealing sin within the human heart.

No man will earnestly seek the gift of God's Holy Spirit in His cleansing power until he has had a personal revelation of the awfulness of sin. He may pray for power for service. He may, even sincerely, ask from God special endowment of grace for triumph in His service. But he never will come to the point of a crucial quest of the greatest of all gifts from God to man until sin is seen in all its horror in his own heart.

However one may attempt to interpret evil in the context, he is inevitably driven back to the fact of sin in the human heart. Here is the chief citadel of Satan. Here is the virulent source of all evil. Here is the undoing of man and mankind. Not until a personal revelation has come that prompts the personal cry in the words of Jeremiah, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9), will the quest for deliverance become urgent and insistent. We remember years ago hearing the comment of a well-known Bible teacher whose skill and sincerity we recognize even now. Asked if he believed in carnality, he said, "I most certainly do and will have to struggle with it until I die." Regardless of his prejudiced thinking, he had never had a full revelation of the sin in his heart. When this revelation comes to a human soul, he will never cease his quest for the will of God till it has been completed in his own heart.

The desperation of quest has already been implied. Jesus clearly teaches its importance. He tells us of the embarrassing plight of a man who was without food when guests came late at night. "And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth" (Luke 11: 5-8). It is somewhat superfluous to play upon the picture Jesus sets before us. It is the obvious lesson that bears the importance, the necessity of importunity in the real need of the hour. In that instance it was bread. In our case it is the Holy Spirit. No greater need faces the one who is a Christian than the gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby plaguing defeats may be turned into victories and limited living may become a life of

fullness. Not only is recognition of one's need essential, but a following through with importunity of quest until the Gift is granted.

And it does sometimes seem as though it is more difficult to obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit and purity than it is to be forgiven. Could this be actually so? There is some logic in this idea, for we remember that the carnal mind is enmity against God and is not subject to the law of God. In other words, the gift of the Holy Spirit involves the dislodging of and death to the carnal mind. Here the battle is always desperate. The conflict becomes crucial and final, so that it does often appear it is harder to be sanctified than it is to be saved. It also seems that Satan opposes this experience more than he does the seeking of forgiveness. Satan knows that the carnal mind is the last and only stronghold remaining within the human heart in league with him. So, when this crisis comes on, he will leave no stone unturned to confuse, discourage, or intimidate. He fully realizes that when carnality is cast out there is no longer welcome ground for his suggestions within the heart.

But there is yet one more important fact to remember in the logic of importunity, and that is motive. God is not going to give such a precious Gift casually. Importunity will lead to scrutiny of motive and a chastened spirit. Only when the heart has renounced all hidden, ulterior motives, all thoughts of personal advantage, will the Gift be given. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). The blessing is bestowed when thirst and hunger reach their spiritual maximum. There was a man in apostolic days who, seeing the outpouring of the Spirit, sought to purchase the gift with money. Not only was his unholy gesture refused, but severe rebuke accompanied the refusal. When the human heart determines to have the gift of the Holy Spirit at all costs and all human reserves are relinquished, then He will come.

Jesus leads us to one more specific condition in the granting of this unprecedented Gift. There must be definiteness of asking. "And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. **FOR EVERY ONE THAT ASKETH RECEIVETH; AND HE THAT SEEKETH FINDETH; AND TO HIM THAT KNOCKETH IT SHALL BE OPENED**" (Luke 11:9-10). Merely to ask God for a greater blessing will not bring the answer. Too many have sought so casually in this regard! They have asked to be given more power, to die a deeper death, to be drawn closer into His presence. But here are petitions too generalized to compel a crisis. One must **ASK** if he would receive; he must **KNOCK** if the door will open; he must **SEEK** if he finds. Why does God seem so exacting when it is His greatest desire to grant the gift of the Holy Spirit to His believing child? He wants us openly to admit our need. He insists that we face the facts squarely. Definite seeking will always result in particular finding. Seek definitely, and the gift of the Holy Spirit will be given.

Jesus closes the lesson with a joyful note of certainty, for it is backed by assurance of Deity. He calls our attention to the love of human parents who, even on their earthly level, will give gifts to children whom they love. **HOW MUCH MORE THEN** will our Father in heaven, with whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning, with whom there can be no selfish thought, give to all His children who ask, the gift of the Holy Spirit? If a son asks bread, will a real father give a stone? If a son pleads for fish, would a parent give a serpent? Should a son ask of his father an egg, would this father give him a scorpion? There is but one answer. How much more, then, will your **HEAVENLY FATHER** give the Holy Spirit to them who ask Him?

I had a father who during his lifetime never refused his son what he asked if he was in a position to grant the request and felt it expedient for his son to have it. I recall one Christmas season in particular. The desire for a gun had become almost an obsession. Long weeks before the time for gifts I began my pleadings, much to the horror of a fearful mother. So guns became the topic of conversation at every timely opportunity. When Christmas Eve came, my hopes had risen to such a pitch of confidence that, instead of hanging up the usual stocking, I hung my trousers; for well I knew they would hold a gun, after a fashion. When morning came, with feverish haste I tiptoed downstairs; and there, sticking out of a leg of those trousers, was my first shotgun! HOW MUCH MORE! HOW MUCH MORE! HOW MUCH MORE will a Heavenly Father give the most precious of all gifts if we come expectantly!

And it is as simple as Jesus tells it. When one recognizes his need sufficiently that he becomes desperate in his quest, when he pleads definitely and confidently, God will give His Holy Spirit, which is His will for us.

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05 -- THE DILEMMA OF HIS WILL

.... every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it.... (John 15:2).

The tyranny of truth is often either unrecognized or ignored. Even though men may be heedless or evasive regarding truth, the universal fact remains that truth is tyrannical. Men's lives frequently end in dismal failure, and the ways of nations lead to tragic futility for no other reason. Truth must be reckoned with, or else the inevitable consequences of failure must be accepted. So general is this fact that, whether it be in the moral realm or the findings of the test tube in the laboratory, the eventualities are always the same.

In no realm of life is this fact more inescapable than in moral relations. There is no escape for us in a realm where moral principle rules. We are moral beings in the likeness of a holy God, with moral destinies to determine in the light of that moral being. And with it all there is that final accounting that results from the moral setting of life. Men build their little towers of Babel to elude the inevitability of it all, only to find in the end confusion and disillusionment. Wise is the man who insists on a courageous facing of truth, regardless of the apparent consequences to himself or his previous thinking.

The wrong reactions, ironically enough, often become very apparent among those dealing in the realm where moral truth finds its source and revelation, the Word of God. Prejudice, unwillingness to yield premises previously maintained or to confess ignorance or misjudgment have again and again led to wide distortions of truth. How honest, how bulwarked with integrity we must be to face truth in its ultimate sense and follow through!

The scripture we propose to present to you in this chapter concerning the will of God for us poses a dilemma that demands genuine courage as we face it. We know of no more arbitrary utterance of our Lord than this one. He confronts us with a dilemma from which there is no escape.

We must choose one alternative or the other, and the choice we make will ultimately determine our destiny.

Before we actually approach the context before us, it is well that we remind ourselves that He is speaking to His own disciples. This is an important observation for us to make, for it most certainly affects the interpretation of the scripture before us. Jesus was always skillful in His approach to men and met them where He found them. But in approaching this matter of the spiritual status of the disciples, we are dealing with a much-debated question. Just why there should be so much confusion at this point is difficult to understand, for Jesus himself definitely declares the spiritual standing of this group of close followers. In this same Gospel, in the seventeenth chapter, Jesus refers to these disciples in unmistakably qualifying terms. Notice some of His references to them:

"I have manifested thy name unto the men WHICH THOU GAVEST ME OUT OF THE WORLD: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.... I pray for them: I PRAY NOT FOR THE WORLD, BUT FOR THEM WHICH THOU HAST GIVEN ME; for they are thine Holy Father, keep through thine own name THOSE WHOM THOU HAST GIVEN ME, that they may be one, as we are.. . . I have given them thy word; and the world HATH HATED THEM, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, EVEN AS I AM NOT OF THE WORLD" (John 17:6-14).

To attempt to evade the fact of the genuine discipleship of these followers by the statement that this was not yet the dispensation of grace is insufficient. No dispensation has been so arbitrary but what God has dispensed His grace from time to time regardless of dispensation. This would be carrying dispensational teaching too far. No one can consistently contend that dispensations are as arbitrarily divided as some would attempt to teach. As far as God's dealing with men is concerned, grace was then what we might well term retroactive. It carried back in many instances to a time before redemption was actually completed on the middle cross. Even Abraham long ago found favor with God through faith looking forward to the work of Calvary yet to come. And it was faith in the future work of Christ, as far as God was concerned, whenever He proffered His grace to men before Jesus died. Down the intervening centuries, here and there God imputed righteousness to those whose faith could reach out in confidence to God, though they themselves did not understand the full implications of their faith. And so Jesus himself witnesses that these disciples who listened to Him that day were ALREADY His children. They were NOW grafted into the Living Vine. We will not raise the fine issue between imputed and actual righteousness at this point but, rather, merely insist that, as far as the Master was concerned, they were IN the Vine. These disciples, then, were, as far as all practical issues are concerned, as much disciples as you and I are today. It was to them then, and to us now, that Jesus brought the truth we face.

Immediately that Jesus began His lesson, His hearers readily caught the trend of His teaching, for He spoke the language of the keepers of vineyards. It is quite possible that, even as He spoke, their eyes instinctively turned to the vineyards stretching up the hillsides of Judea. His hearers were familiar with the parable, for many of them no doubt had spent back-breaking hours pruning and cultivating in those very vineyards. But even though most of us are not familiar with the care of vineyards and even though centuries have passed, His lesson is simple and within our grasp.

Jesus states the background of His lesson concisely and clearly: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). With unoffending assumption He declares to His hearers that He himself is the only source of true spiritual life -- THE TRUE VINE. Following the figure through, there is no other origin of spiritual life except in Jesus Christ himself. And that life can be realized only by grafting or actual union with Him. He is here declaring the same challenging truth that He repeated without hesitation in varying ways throughout His ministry. He is the only way to God, to hope, and salvation.

Since, then, it is to His own disciples Jesus speaks, and since Jesus speaks to them as already being grafted into the Vine, He begins His discourse to His hearers where they are, as He says to them, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away" (John 15:2). Since Jesus assumes the fact of grafting as already accomplished in the lives of His hearers, He does not raise the issues involved in the process of grafting. But, frankly, we dare not begin with this assumption because too few people today understand what it means to be a true Christian.

What does grafting imply in its spiritual meaning? What was it Jesus assumed as having already been accomplished in the lives of these followers? To put the matter in the simplest terms, we say that there are two operations in the grafting process. First, the graft must be chosen and cut from its parent vine in preparation for grafting into its new source of life. Then an incision must be made in the vine where the graft will be placed. The graft is then cut to fit the incision made to receive it. If properly placed and protected, eventually the life from the vine will flow through the grafted branch with resulting fruitfulness. To carry the analogy over into the spiritual life is an easy matter. First, the one who will be grafted into Christ, the Living Vine, must, of his own choice, separate himself from his old sins, associations, and life. This is what we commonly refer to as repentance. It is the human side of grafting. The divine part of grafting has long since been effected, for on the middle cross the side of God was opened nearly twenty centuries ago. And whosoever will may come by faith and be grafted into the Living Vine. When anyone will turn with resolution from his sins and all associations of evil and in simple faith trust the finished work of Calvary, he will, in the figure of Jesus, be grafted into the True Vine. Then divine life will flow through his very being just as the sap flows from the vine through the newly grafted branch. Then will be realized what the scripture affirms: "Therefore if any man be IN Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

Before leaving the crisis of grafting and coming to grips with the heart of Jesus' teaching to His disciples, we raise an important question. Does such a relationship as is established by spiritual grafting into Christ forever settle one's relationship with Him? Not according to the context or experience. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch...." (John 15:4, 6). Thus we see that believing is the entering condition, abiding is the continuing condition. The same activity of will and faith that brings one into experiential relationship with Christ must continue to operate while this relationship is maintained. To teach that one sustains an indelible and unforfeitable relationship with Christ when he has been grafted into Christ is assuming too much. Man still has power of choice, which he must continue to exercise as long as he lives. And it is the exercise of this choice that brings about that intimacy of fellowship which characterizes true Christian experience. The constant choice of faith and

obedience upon the part of the Christian brings a divine response that produces joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is this joyous, voluntary relationship that is implied in the words of John in his epistle, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP ONE WITH ANOTHER, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Only by the free play of human personality with the divine can one have a relationship that answers to the meaning and beauty of Christian experience.

We have now arrived at the heart of Jesus' lesson, the dilemma that is involved in His will for us. Note how explicitly and challengingly Jesus states it, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).

What does Jesus mean when He says that every branch that does not bear fruit will be cut away? He simply means, in the figure of pruning, that each branch that fails to bring forth fruit in harmony with the life that flows into the branch will be removed from its place in the Vine. Once having been grafted into Christ, we must produce the life consistent with the divine relationship if we are to remain in the Vine. Only through consistent human response to divine light and will can vital relationship be preserved. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "If a man ABIDE NOT IN ME, he is cast forth as a branch" (John 15:6). We must never lose sight of the basic fact that man possesses a sovereignty in his own right given him by God. That sovereignty continues as long as earthly relations exist. It is not enough to assume that God's sovereignty alone is involved. Man must exercise his sovereignty as well. He must walk in the light. He must remain obedient. He must seek the place of prayer and constantly and joyfully find new strength for the hours ahead. To remove the element of human sovereignty from spiritual relationship actually destroys much that is vital to true Christian relationship. Christian experience is fundamentally based upon a loving constancy of devotion between the soul and Christ.

We now turn to the other side of the dilemma: "And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2). Every branch that maintains the vital relation of union with the Vine must be purged in order that abundance of fruit may be had. The dilemma is simple but inescapable. It is a choice between pruning and purging. If vital relationship with Christ is to be continued, then one must submit to the purging crisis. If this crisis is refused when light has come, there remains but one alternative and that is pruning. But what does John mean by his choice of the word purge? It is the identical word he later uses in his epistle (I John 1:7). It means to cleanse, to purify. In harmony with actual experience and corroborative scriptures, Jesus meant that our hearts must be purified from THE SIN that hinders abundant fruitfulness. When the light of this crisis comes to one, there is but one of two decisions that can be made. He must either accept the crisis of cleansing or refuse it. If cleansing is refused, one course remains-pruning. And this is the actual logic of Jesus. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered . . ." (John 15:6). To make His lesson climactic and final, Jesus continues, ". . . and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

This is the dilemma of His will for us. Holiness of heart is ever the objective of a holy God for His children. His purpose is repeatedly made clear by figure, command, and implication. Whether it be in the suggestiveness of the possession of Canaan by the people of God, or in the

direct command, "Be ye holy; for I am holy," the inescapable challenge is ever present through the scripture, the challenge of His will for us-holiness of heart and life.

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06 -- THE PROMISE OF HIS WILL

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should . . . wait for the promise of the Father. . . . (Acts 1:4).

One cannot study the Bible very long without coming to a thrilling realization of the thoroughness of the divine anticipation of our human need. Reverent study reveals that God has not left unplanned one detail necessary for our redemption, spiritual welfare, and ultimate triumph. Peter reminds us of this very fact when he declares, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Peter 1:3-4). As a loving parent anticipates the details of a long journey to be made by one unaccustomed to travel, so God has anticipated each of our personal needs on our journey to heaven. The parent not only makes available the transportation for the trip but secures, with the painstaking concern of love, reservations, connections, and all that will help to make the inexperienced and perhaps fearful traveler comfortable and safe along the way. God did this and infinitely more when, before the foundation of the world, He planned His will for you and me.

The scriptures that are associated with the Promise of the Father are a revelation of the meaning of His will for us. We hear Jesus as He speaks those words which Luke records in the very close of his Gospel, "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). It was but a short time later when, on the Day of Pentecost, these very disciples realized the glorious fulfillment of this promise: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come.... they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.... But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2:1-17).

Turn for a moment to the Old Testament where the promise of the Father is mentioned: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring" (Isaiah 44:3). "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28-29).

Definitely associated with these Old Testament glimpses of the promise of the Father are the words of Jesus himself in those days before His death and ascension, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 14:16, 26; 15:26).

It is very clear in these and many other scriptures that it was God's plan to give himself in the form of the Third Person of the Trinity to all who loved Him in this age of grace. But even this promise might seem confusing and meaningless to one who has not carefully followed its significance. So let us turn to the perspective of the command of Jesus in the first chapter of the Acts, that they should not depart from Jerusalem but wait for the promise of the Father. Jesus himself was soon to leave them. His departure would leave them comfortless and lonely. The center about which they had now built their lives would be gone. It was therefore necessary that SOMEONE take the place of Jesus when He left to return to His Father. Thus it had been planned by the Father that the Holy Spirit would be the Gift from himself to these who had forsaken all to follow His Son. Moreover, the Father himself, because of His essential nature, could not meet the needs of these disciples and the oncoming generations of believers who should follow them. It took the presence of the Holy Spirit to complete this obvious pattern of divine purpose in the lives of men on earth. The picture, then, becomes plain and understandable -- the Father, pervading and prevailing over all, reigning supreme in the universe as the Father of Spirits, the Sovereign of all that is; the Son now partaking of the nature of High Priest and Advocate at the right hand of the Father; the Holy Spirit becomes the particular Gift of the Trinity to a believing and expectant Church. Had Jesus remained upon this earth, He never could have done the work which the Holy Spirit can do. By the very nature of His glorified humanity He would have been limited by space and time. The Spirit, who is essential spirit and hence never limited by flesh, can in the mysterious reality of Deity manifest himself in omnipresence, thus becoming the actual One to dwell in our hearts without limitation. This is, without question, what Jesus meant when He said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). And so the gift of the Father in the person of the Spirit makes it possible for the Father himself to be manifested and the Son glorified among men.

We now come to the vital question of this chapter. What is the special significance of the promise of the Father? Why should God have taken such particular pains to have planned His redemptive scheme so that the Holy Spirit would become a definite bestowment and gift to all believing children who might seek Him? The gift of the Spirit, which is the promise of the Father, fills certain essential needs in the spiritual lives of men that, no other provision can afford. The gift of the Holy Spirit as the promise of the Father fills a definite need in enabling man to partake of the moral likeness of the Father and the Son.

It is unnecessary to elaborate the moral nature of God the Father and God the Son, though we admit that a vision of the holiness of God is a genuine need of men. For, after all, the holiness of God is central in any true concept. Granted that men have placed the love of God as the central concept of Deity. We are aware that the matter is open to debate, and yet the essential holiness of

God is a logical center from which all the qualities of Deity must emanate. But regardless of the philosophy of the concept, the practical fact remains. A clear conception of the holiness of God is fundamental in an understanding of sin and redemption. "This, then, is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). God is LIGHT, absolute purity, in whom there is not one shade of evil.

It would be well for one to turn back to the description of Moses meeting God in the holy mount. One could read with profit the ceremonial demands of God upon His people in the long ago in the light of His awful holiness. We hear the echo of these Old Testament utterances in the words of Peter, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (I Peter 1:14-16).

Jesus, even in His humanity, is as positively identified with this unique and essential holiness as the Father himself. "I and my Father are one." "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." "Which of you convinceth me of sin." (John 10:30; 8:58, 46). It is, then, through the gift of the Holy Spirit that men are enabled to partake once again of this essentially holy nature of the Father and the Son. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who THROUGH THE ETERNAL SPIRIT offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Hebrews 9:13-14). "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9). It is through the effective agency of the Holy Spirit that Christ offered himself to God. It is through the same effective ministry of the same Holy Spirit that the moral natures of men may be purified, restoring the moral identity with a holy God.

The gift of the Spirit in the promise of the Father fulfills the need of completed fellowship. Here is a demand of love that grows out of the essential character of God's holiness. His nature demands moral restoration of man, so that love may have a way to manifest itself in a fellowship that is real. It is through Christ that we have received the Spirit of adoption. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). But this relationship of adoption, as wonderful as it is, speaks of limited fellowship. Adoption tells of pardon, restoration to family affiliation. Gracious indeed is the assurance that comes to the heart when the kiss of forgiveness is given and restoration is realized. It was the greatest hour in the life of the prodigal when this longed-for moment came. But the richest intimacies of fellowship are not realized in adoption, for the human heart still holds reserves of selfishness that thwart a fullness of fellowship. It takes the coming of the Promise of the Father in His cleansing power to make that fellowship complete and full. "Sanctify them through thy truth.... that they all may be one.... I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17: 17, 21, 23).

Here is a fellowship that transcends all others. It beggars human description, for it can be known only by personal experience. It is a fellowship mystical yet actual, indescribable yet sweet, where human consciousness can recognize the indwelling presence of the Father and the Son through the Spirit. And this fellowship carries even out into human relations. The same Spirit that

dwells within my heart abides in the heart of another, bringing us together in a human intimacy of fellowship and understanding far beyond the tenderest human ties.

It is also a fellowship of perspective. And how important common perspective is to genuine fellowship! As one modern writer puts it, we look on the world from within this relationship which gives us the gaze of Deity upon life itself. It means that this fellowship through the indwelling Spirit gives to us a personal understanding of the love of God for men. Limited as it is by human personality, yet the Spirit brings with His coming, insight and understanding which can be known in no other way.

The gift of the Spirit as the promise of the Father fills a very personal need in giving a required capacity for service. Every reader of the New Testament has been awed by the words of Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father" (John 14:12). The challenge of Christian service for our day can only be met through the adequacy of the indwelling Spirit, the Promise of the Father. The Holy Spirit organizes the life for full expression. He brings the personality to its maximum. It is not a personality inflation, but rather the development of the potential powers of the being. When evil spirits hold sway in the human personality, whether it be through the sheer spirit of the age or by actual domination, personality is dwarfed, bringing servitude and frustration. But when the Holy Spirit controls the life, the personality is emancipated and brought to the fullness of its inherent powers. This endowment for service grants ability for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. It cannot be denied that, where the Holy Spirit is honored and given His place as the promise of the Father, missionary vision and activity are enlivened.

Little did those who first heard Jesus speak realize the implications of His words. But you and I, upon whom the end of the age is coming, are privileged to grasp in some real measure the meaning of the promise of the Father, as the gift of the Holy Spirit fulfills the will of God in us.

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07 -- JESUS' PRAYER FOR HIS WILL

Sanctify them through thy truth . . . (John 17:17).

The prayers of Jesus recorded in the Gospels are few in comparison with His words of ministry or instances of His oft going apart to pray. Each time one of these prayers has been preserved by divine purpose it reveals a pointed significance. There was the time Jesus prayed at the tomb of Lazarus. Jesus himself revealed the particular reason for His prayer at that time. "And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 11:42). His prayer in the Garden, His prayer for the thief on the cross need no comment. Their respective purposes are direct and apparent.

But here is recorded a prayer of Jesus that holds a place both unique and significant. It was the last public prayer He offered apart from the words on the cross. Hence, it must stand conspicuous and almost alone in importance and meaning. One's last words, even those of the Son of Man, are bound to reveal the man. How much more a last prayer! Whenever a man speaks to his

God in the closing hours of his life, his words are bound to reveal the deepest longings of his being and the strongest urge of his heart. Jesus knew that the cross was not far away. All that He had come to accomplish, all that He longed after for His followers now focused into a passionate cry of prayer. Here in this prayer He gathers up all His teaching of the past three years, telling His Father His deepest concern and longing for these who had forsaken all to follow Him.

Looking into the immediate future of crisis and confusion, He had asked them, "Do ye now believe?" Then assuring them that, in spite of the fact that the hour was near when they would be scattered, they might still have His peace, "these words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come . . . As one reads on through this passionate prayer of divine purpose, he cannot escape the climax of the prayer in the seventeenth verse. All that He says before this climaxes in this definite request to the Father. And all that follows reverts to its potential fulfillment.

And now as we come face to face with this prayer which, obviously, is a revelation of the longing of Jesus that the Father's will might be fulfilled in these first followers, we must settle some simple yet fundamental problems before we can fully appreciate the meaning of the prayer. Two simple questions arise which must be frankly faced if we are to interpret the prayer adequately. First, there is the question, "For whom was He praying?" Then there is the other, "Just what was He praying for?"

It is needless to say that at this very point there has been an almost endless discussion. Repeated attempts have been made to show that these for whom Jesus prayed were shut up to a former dispensation; that, since this recorded instance is before the actual death and hence atonement of Jesus, these disciples could not have been really converted and regenerated. The position has been tenaciously maintained that all that transpired before the crisis of the Cross is inevitably related to the Old Testament economy. In fact, some have been so dogmatic in their position in this regard that they would deprive all Christians of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. It will serve no purpose for us to discuss this position, since it is both untenable and largely apart from the point in question.

Others, likewise, in their efforts to limit the content of the prayer of Jesus have stoutly maintained that, though the prayer was directed in its larger implications to the disciples, yet it was for them alone. They insist that there could be no dispensational implications within the limits of the prayer. To this argument and position we will let the scripture make its own reply later on.

It is not difficult to find a thorough and practical manner by which we can discover just who these disciples were as regards their spiritual condition. Surmises can readily be made, fine-spun theories put forward; but in the last analysis, to the honest seeker for truth, the Scriptures must speak for themselves. And when they speak, the word they utter is final. So let us put to the Scriptures themselves the following simple proposition: First, these followers of Jesus were never converted. Secondly, perhaps they had been converted; but, in the heat and conflict of personal jealousy and aspiration for the place of honor at His side, and for His particular personal approbation, they had lost what experience they might have enjoyed. The third proposition is, of course, inevitable; they had been born again and were still in gracious favor with their Lord. Let

us, then, consider these several propositions one by one and establish the true status of the disciples by the process of elimination through the Scriptures.

First, they had never been converted. Of course it is at this point that it has been argued that, because of dispensational barriers, they simply could not have been converted men. I said a moment ago that this position was unfounded and really apart from the question before us. In spite of this, we will pause just long enough to say that dispensational boundaries are not as arbitrarily set up as some would assume. Precedent was established early in the Scriptures, for God ignored actual dispensational limitations as regards personalities He wished to favor. Even in the dim days of thwarted law God purposely poured out His Spirit upon individuals for a particular purpose. Likewise, if the argument demanded such justification, it could easily be maintained here that God, out of interest for the beginnings of His spiritual kingdom on earth, broke over the barriers that existed and gave grace to these who had left all to follow His only begotten Son. Regardless of this, the fact remains that it is neither illogical nor impossible in the light of scripture for faith to find satisfaction in Christ as the Messiah and King even before Calvary was actually enacted. But what says the Scripture? Let us allow the recorded Word to speak in its own behalf.

Luke, in his Gospel, gives us a very clear record of the very position before us. Following the appointment of the twelve as His own disciples and their being sent forth, He appointed other seventy. Luke puts it like this, "After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two by two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come" (Luke 10:1). Later on the record is given of the results of their ministry, "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name" (Luke 10:17). Then follows Jesus' significant rejoinder, which beyond doubt spiritually classifies these His disciples, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Now there seems little need of argument after this. Regardless of how their names had been written in heaven, Jesus said they had been. And this should be sufficient for any man either in his own behalf or in concern for another. Some measure of spiritual illumination had been granted them, for Jesus continued, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see...."

John likewise records the words of Jesus concerning His disciples. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). But, one might say, in the former instance the record is to the seventy but now it is of the twelve. There need be no question at this point, for surely the greater includes the lesser. If the names of the seventy were written in heaven, surely those of the faithful twelve were also. We can but conclude, therefore, that the followers of Jesus even before Calvary were accepted by their Master and their names were written in heaven. In other words, they were regenerated and converted.

The second question now confronts us. Even though they had been converted, perchance, as we before suggested, they had lost this glorious relationship through conflict with one another. Here John speaks in the very record he gives us of the prayer of Jesus. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word" (John 17:6). This is Jesus' clear testimony concerning them himself.

THEY HAD KEPT HIS WORD. Again, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition" (John 17:12). We must then conclude both that these disciples were converted and that Jesus had kept them in this relationship.

The other proposition naturally follows. They for whom Jesus now prayed to be sanctified were His own; they were, regardless of the seeming mystery of it all, converted disciples. And so it is that Jesus continued in His prayer in harmony with this assumption, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:9, 14). And so, regardless of the implications of the prayer, which we will now look into, Jesus was praying for a group of men who, in His own divine judgment, were His even to the extent that the world recognized the relationship and hated them. Their names, too, were recorded in heaven; and their relationship with God, heaven, and Jesus himself was settled beyond argument.

So now having, we believe, adequately established the identity of those for whom Jesus prayed, let us discover the implications of His prayer. After all, for what was Jesus praying in behalf of these His first followers, these through whom He planned to begin His kingdom on earth? "Father, sanctify them," was His cry. But what was the meaning of this cry? Obviously our interest centers around the word "sanctify." We know what some will immediately claim—that He meant they should be dedicated to the task of launching His Church or kingdom on earth, that they were to be particularly dedicated to one great end—that of being the human instruments of divine purpose. To all this we give assent. This was their task. But the full meaning of the word and the cry of His heart carried further than this.

It is true that the Old Testament conception of sanctification was separation. But remember we are now in the beginning of the New Testament, and Jesus now ushers in a new era. This great prayer was in a definite sense the projection of the meaning of the sanctification of the Old Testament into a new realm. Then it was ceremonial; now it is to be spiritual. Then it was imputed; now it is to be imparted. Then it was an outward conformity; now it is to be an inward purity. The key of Jesus' heart cry in this particular is revealed in the way He prayed. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be truly sanctified" (John 17:19, margin). In other words, Jesus declares that He is, through His cross, dedicating or sanctifying himself to a complete atonement in order that these who accepted this atonement, these for whom He was now praying and for whom He was soon to die, might be sanctified in the moral sense. They were to be, through His atonement, cleansed from sin. If we were to read this prayer of Jesus with full literalness in harmony with the actual tenses used, it would read like this, "Father, sanctify them once for all through Thy truth: And for their sakes I am sanctifying myself, that they also might be sanctified once for all through Thy truth." This is the very thought the writer of the Hebrews had in mind when he declared, "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." A careful study of the figure used by the writer reveals that the sanctification procured by Christ on the cross was far more than a mere separation for service. It was and is a cleansing from sin.

Earlier we discussed the question, "For whom did Jesus petition the Father?" Plainly it was for His very own disciples, who had received His word and kept it, whose names were now written in heaven. Were nothing further declared by Jesus in this regard, it could be consistently inferred that, if He prayed for them, was He not also praying for all like them in generations and centuries following? Was not His prayer, by implication at least, projected past these living believers to other believers likewise who would follow in their train? Such, we repeat, would seem to be a legitimate inference.

But we are not left to mere inference. Jesus climaxes His cry with the thrilling words, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." Here is expressed an actual projection of the heart of Jesus in prayer to include each succeeding generation of believers until the end of the age. Thank God that you and I were included in this priestly prayer of Jesus. In this sacred audience with the Father, even in His passionate ardor for that group of followers about Him then, He did not forget you and me centuries later. We who have believed on Him through their word are clearly included in this prayer for purity. Here again Jesus was the WORD. He spoke the heart of God in prayer, pleading the divine will for us. And in pleading the will of the Father for us He offered himself as the redemptive medium by which the very will of the Father could be then and can be now completed in the hearts of men. God's will for us is here patterned in the prayer of His own Son as He faced the agonies of Gethsemane and the shame of the middle cross.

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08 -- THE URGENCY OF HIS WILL

Hebrews 3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice,"

The relationship of God to time has always been a mystery. From our human viewpoint it is exceedingly difficult to understand how God, with whom there is only eternity, readily accommodates himself to this concept so essential to our understanding. And yet, since our God is all-knowing, we must conclude that this adjustment is not difficult for Him.

But to adjust this very concept to the problem of our moral freedom has posed problems for the past centuries and now. How can God really know the end from the beginning and not invade the realm of our personal choice? As the scripture has declared, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us...." (Deuteronomy 29:29). There are realms of spiritual truth where we cannot go, and we should be content. But there is a simple answer for those who do not demand too much. God could easily be conceived as the Spectator sitting at a vantage point, watching the parade of humans. With an all-seeing eye He observes the parade from beginning to end, but just because He can do this does not presuppose that He has interfered directly with the way man has chosen to take. But regardless of the answers we might find and the measure to which those answers can satisfy inquiring and critical minds, the fact remains that time is an accommodation with God. He has set the boundaries of time and planned the cycles of the sun so that finite man may measure his ways through this brief corridor of time. Since we are creatures of time, measurements must be made, and that God has done with infinite concern.

God's timing, as far as man is concerned, has always been perfect. It is true that there have been periods when it has seemed that God has moved slowly. To man it appeared as though God had almost forgotten. So it was through the weary centuries that eventually climaxed in the fulfillment of the redemptive plan. Centuries slowly dragged past and man, wearied by waiting, turned impatiently to his own ways. The very days when Jesus first came were days like this. The multitudes, in their waiting for the fullness of time, had built their own traditions and professed spiritual cultures; so that, when He did come, He was resented by the very ones who should have welcomed His appearing. But remember that in it all God has not been at fault. He has matched time with the depth of man's fall. It has literally taken the weary centuries to bring man back to a sufficient measure of comprehension that he could grasp the import of grace and a personal consciousness of his God.

But time in terms of redemptive measure finally came to focus with the coming of the Son of Man. Paul expresses it well in the Galatian letter. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). It was God's infinite knowledge that determined this fullness of time. But when this time did come, God called man to moral accounting. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...." (Hebrews 1:1-2). And since He has spoken, man can no longer follow ways that seem right in the sight of his own eyes. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30).

With this fulfillment of divine purpose and provision came an urgency of time. From then on God's call to man and the moral demands He has made have always been couched in terms of urgency. It would almost seem as though, since time had dragged so wearily in the past, and God had been of necessity so accommodating to man's failure, now that light and life were available the moral tempo was suddenly changed and the cry of God to man became insistently, "Now! Now! Now!" And this is, I repeat, the tempo of Scripture. There is a consistent urgency for immediate action. There is no longer excuse, for ample provision has been made. Perhaps in the centuries past God has been questioned because of His apparent slothfulness. But such can no longer be done. It is with almost breathless intensity the Revelator speaks those closing words of invitation, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). Here are words that speak not only of gracious invitation, but they also tell of urgency. Come! Come! Come! NOW is the time to come! Jesus himself repeatedly impressed the importance of accepting light while it was available. "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth" (John 12:35).

God's appeal to man for his salvation is always couched in terms of urgency. Paul, mindful of Isaiah's word, says, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (II Corinthians 6:2). Isaiah, even so early as his day, felt the essential urgency of God's call when he cried, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," is the exhortation of the Hebrew letter (12:14). One cannot read through the New Testament without catching a sense of pressure and urgency. Man's brief span of life, the necessity of grasping the passing golden opportunity, coupled with God's outreach of heart, accentuate the urgency of His call to men.

The entire context to which we turn your thinking now bears this same sense of pressure. Five times the word "today" is used in the short span of part of the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews. And the crux of the matter is apparent in the fact that in this context the call is to holiness. Here the urgency of God's call is just as clear and just as crucial as any part of His appeal to man. As you may read again these two chapters, the third and the fourth, you cannot escape the pressure of the Holy Spirit as He presses upon the reader God's insistent call to holiness of heart, which is, after all, His will for us. It is strange how prejudice distorts perspective. Good men have now and then, because of deep prejudice at this point, insisted that there is not one bit of evidence within the entire New Testament that God plans to give man purity of heart and holiness of life here and now. And yet here it is unmistakably clear, His will for us, pressed upon us with the ever-present consistency of divine love. "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart" (Hebrews 3:7, 8).

Nor, we repeat, is this an isolated passage as regards God's call to holiness now as a revelation of His will for us. There is urgency in the words of Zacharias, who was "filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1: 67, 74, 75). Jesus himself, when pressed by His disciples concerning the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, said, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me..... (Acts 1:7-8). The apostles felt the same compulsion when they received word that Samaria had now received the word of God through the ministry of Philip. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8:14-15). Likewise, Paul's masterful argument in its entirety in the sixth, seventh, and eighth chapters of Romans, contains this pulsation of urgency. Reckon with sin now! Deal with this greatest of all moral issues now! Seek deliverance from the body of sin now!

The logic of the urgency of God's call to holiness in scripture is easily understood. Holiness is a moral necessity. To this principle of truth all thinking people agree. Somewhere between the present and when man meets his Maker, vital moral adjustment must be made or fearful consequences are inevitable. This basic fact leads to another conclusion which inevitably grows out of the first one. If holiness is a moral necessity and hence a moral quality, it is based upon personal choice. If it is based upon personal choice, there is an irresistible logic of urgency involved. Such a choice must be made while time permits, which simply means today. For today only do we have any assurance of possessing. We can only hope that God's mercies will include another day, while the day we now live is our prized possession in terms of moral choice and destiny. For when death comes suddenly, stealthily, moral destiny is forever settled. Or when Jesus himself returns, time at once ceases as regards the choice of personal destiny. To try to

evade these implications by insisting that holiness of character will be automatically bestowed either in death or at the return of Jesus reveals an utter misunderstanding of moral truth. It is today's decision that the Scriptures plead for. Today take heed lest one be possessed by an evil heart of unbelief. Today exhort one another to seek. Today harden not your heart. Today enter into this rest that remains for the children of God, which is His glorious will for us.

We repeat that a certain logic persists throughout God's call to holiness now. As already suggested, in the light of the very nature of time, whatever redemption holds, its moral terms must be laid hold of now. It is the repetition of the same old warning. And yet it has never lost its significance because the warning is so universal and so true. Death is always imminent. In fact, it seems more imminent than it ever did when we realize that man, through his own impulsive haste and modern ingenuity, hurls thousands into eternity each year through sheer accident. Time is so insecure and yet so valid a possession that one must utilize it now to his own moral good. Holiness is God's will for us; and, since it has been wonderfully provided in redemptive plan, we must seek it today.

The Cross is the climax of redemption. If holiness is in this Cross upon which the Son of God hung, then there is an urgency there too. There is no question but what Jesus did suffer without the gate that you and I might be sanctified. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Hebrews 13:12). "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him" (I John 3:5-6). "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Yes, holiness is obviously within the redemptive power of His cross. This being true, the immediate necessity of claiming the provisions of this Cross cannot be denied. Delay for any reason whatever is pure contradiction. His will is for us today.

Holiness is likewise a challenge to immediate service. The time to serve Christ is now. This is why Paul appeals to all who read, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). How can one who finds his inner self in constant conflict adequately serve his Lord? The presence of sin always lessens both ability and desire for service. So long as self remains an existent factor within the personality, it is utterly impossible to serve as God is worthy to be served. Who was the unprofitable servant Jesus told us about? It was the man who feared his Lord's return. Jesus makes it very clear that the talent was not hidden particularly because it was the only one the man possessed but, rather, because fear was the dominating motive. And true it is that, while fear of consequences, fear of others remains, because of the presence of a sinful disposition within the life, one's services are measurably paralyzed. Only when the heart is free from sin is service free, glad, and unmeasured.

There is another remaining aspect of urgency which we must consider. It is phrased in the warning of the writer when he said, "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). The balance of man's moral nature is finely drawn and tensed. It does not take much tampering to throw it completely out

of balance. This fact is especially conspicuous at this point of God's call to holiness. For here we touch the very core of man's moral nature. To trifle here, to presume here, to rationalize here means certain harm. The writer of Hebrews clearly expresses his fear at this point when he cries, "Let us therefore fear . . ." (4:1). The more vital the moral truth, the more personally fundamental the problem, the more delicate the response. We should heed His will for us when first that will becomes clear and personal. The positive side of this emphasis is found in the reminder that God seeks above all to develop holy character within this brief span of time, so that our capacities for the eternal will be at the maximum. Only when the heart is unhampered by sin can character development come to its greatest maximum. It becomes so clear, then, that God's will for us has its logic and its inevitable challenge in the call to holiness now, for all who properly esteem His will!

* * * * *

09 -- THE JOY OF HIS WILL

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

This old world is on an endless quest for new thrills. From the very early days of time man has sought for something to freshen his jaded senses. It has been a weary round of effort, but on and on it goes. For, after all, the quest is kept within the realm of sense, and that realm is rather narrow in its scope. As soon as one new thrill has lost its freshness, yet another must be conceived to keep up with the unquenched thirst of the human soul. Since thrills come from experience, man constantly seeks for new experiences, only to find disappointment and irritation at the futility of it all. Some time ago the newspapers reported the suicide of a girl in Hollywood who left a simple note of explanation as a record of her act. She could find nothing new to thrill her; so, to avoid the boredom of such a life, she ended it all. Such an incident sounds cheap and strained; yet, after all, it does reveal the aching heart of man in his quest for satisfaction.

For some reason or other man seems to miss the point that satisfaction cannot be found from the experiencing of thrills through things. The path here is very short and the end so disappointing! Nor can one find any lasting fullness of satisfaction in other human beings. It is true this is a far higher level of satisfaction, but even here disappointments and heartaches far outweigh the thrills obtained. Friendship is in itself a great and worthwhile thrill, but even this comes to an end through the sheer weakness of humanity or else is cut short in death. We do not disparage human love, nor do we reflect upon those fine and worthy friendships that all too infrequently occur between human beings. But even they, at their best, are rife with uncertainty; and too often the fabric of humanity proves to be too fragile to stand the strain of long wear.

All of this endless seeking by humans seems almost ironical when the end is observed. And because of this men grow cynical and come to feel that life, after all, holds little of permanent worth or value. Back of all this wistful longing and ceaseless quest there must be a reason. And there is. It is the deep and genuine hunger of the human spirit for more than is human. The only answer man has ever found that is really adequate is Jesus Christ. He can satisfy the desire for experiences that bring thrills that last, thrills that drive deep beneath the surface, thrills that make the passing show of the world cheap and meaningless. As skeptical as the world may be, here is

really the answer to the persistent cry of the human spirit for satisfaction. As scripture so clearly puts it, "Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He reaches back into one's past and fully removes those haunting fears of guilt. He masters the present by His grace, and He fills the soul with hope and confidence for the eternal tomorrows. Here and now, however, we are interested in just one phase of His grace today.

The satisfaction that Jesus gives the one who fully trusts Him is defined by Jesus himself as a state of joy. His delight is that His joy might remain in us and that our joy might be full. When we try to define the meaning of this joy that comes from Christ, it is well to remember that its quality is distinct and unique. The old, familiar comparison may help us to understand. There is a vast difference between the happiness of this world and the joy that comes from God. Happiness, after all, depends upon happenings. When circumstances are favorable and all is well within the narrow sphere of self-concern, happiness thrives. But when circumstances are unpleasant and self is frustrated by things, happiness is gone. Joy, on the other hand, exists in spite of outward circumstances so long as inner adjustments are maintained with Deity. For, after all, joy is an inner quality which has its source in facts beyond mere time and substance. It is well to remember that joy is more than a mere state of ecstasy. Its roots are far deeper than mere emotion, though that is included. It is, rather, a deep and conscious state of well-being. It is an inner assurance that throbs within, giving confidence and spiritual poise. Sometimes stimulated and encouraged by spiritual assurance, it becomes joy unspeakable and full of glory. But always present and active, this joy stabilizes and confirms His presence and smile.

Now, turning to the context in hand, we first of all call your attention to the simple observation that the joy which Jesus gives and herein described has its foundation relationship. Although we have already implied this fact, we wish to note it in the immediate context. "These things have I spoken unto you, that..." you might understand the basis of the joy I now give unto you. The relationship of experience is clearly implied in the familiar figure of the vine and the branches. This figure we already have dealt with in a chapter by itself. Vital, experiential relationship is the only basis of joy. As we said at the very beginning, joy comes from valid experience. The joy that is truly joy comes from no other source than experience in divine reality; and that comes only through Christ, who is the Door to all spiritual knowledge.

With these simple observations confirmed, we now turn to the immediate context to see if we can in some measure appraise the joy of His will. There are two aspects of this joy which reveal its character and identity clearly stated by John. There is, first of all, the source of this joy and, then, its inherent nature -- all of which John affirms that Jesus taught while here on earth.

It is the joy of purity. "... and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:2-3). Jesus here tells us of one of the most intrinsic qualities of His joy. When you and I have been purged from sin, there instantly comes the joy that accompanies a sense of moral cleanness. Such a state, so foreign to our normal human experience, cannot help bringing a sense of joy. For the first time in your life, that clinging sense of inner guilt is gone. It has been, indeed, as Paul describes it, the body of sin that has tenaciously clung to your very being. In truth, this clinging sense of moral deformity has been prevalent from that first hour of moral awakening, until its presence has become a part of the very life. There seemed to be no escape. When for a moment

moral aspiration felt an upsurge or desire, there it was, coldly and brutally benumbing the very effort to rise to other moral levels. And, regardless of the actual interpretation of Paul's words, they do so accurately describe the mood of the soul in its helpless moral plight! "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7:19-20). But now a glorious emancipation has come! Through the purging presence of the Holy Spirit a new sense of purity has come. Only those who have actually felt this expression of spiritual joy can really understand. It is the joy that Jesus gives.

There is likewise the joy of abiding. "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4). Here is the joy that comes from trust. Once this vital and realizable relationship has been achieved through faith in the Blood that cleanses, there comes a relaxation of spirit that produces joy. For the first time in one's life, the spirit senses a new security. A new confidence is born within; for in some mystical but real sense the spirit relaxes trustfully, and joy witnesses to the validity of it all. To be vitally associated with Christ, not only in a consciousness of trust but in a knowledge of His life throbbing unhindered within, brings joy that is real and lasting.

The joy of fruitfulness makes its contribution to the whole. There is no delight comparable to that when one is made aware that his limited human conduct has been so sublimated into the divine will and purpose that glory is being given to the Christ he serves. Humbly to understand that somehow this vital experience now enjoyed helps one to adorn the glorious gospel of Christ, that is joy indeed. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit...." (John 15:8) is the assurance Jesus himself gives. To realize that a human life formerly abandoned to self and sin can be so fully transformed that this very life can become a glory to his God, this is joy that is real.

There is, of course, a close relationship between joy and love. Real love must have as its close complement a sense of joyous emotion. Human love has its close parallel. When love is real, emotions run deep and true. And it is these very inner emotions that bring love its true wealth. It is when love becomes a commonly accepted thing that joy likewise dims. But while love is fresh and real, joy is thrilling and satisfying. Jesus assures us, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love" (John 15:9). When this love is made fully real by complete surrender and conformity to His will, then joy reaches its fullness. It is the joy of love; and this, without doubt, is a part of the content of divine joy. It is impossible to think of love apart from its accompanying emotion of joy. As long as one keeps the relationship real, his joy will continue. It will not always be outwardly evident, but the slightest thought of His presence will bring an inward quickening of satisfaction and content. It is really His joy we possess because He loves us as the Father has loved Him.

There is another aspect of the content of this joy. It is the joy of accomplishment. "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). There is a true joy that comes from knowing the task is finished and the labor rewarded. There is a parallel in the human realm. There is always genuine satisfaction in labors faithfully done and particular results achieved. The hard and difficult task has been finished, but the greatest true reward is not essentially some material gain but the inner sense of satisfaction that comes as a moral triumph. But when we labor at some Kingdom task and see the reward of our labors and

know that the very Kingdom for which we live is advanced and the glory of our Lord is enhanced, this is joy indeed.

Now we must come to the nature of this joy. Here Jesus is very definite as He tells us what His joy is like. It is, first of all, a personal joy. "That my joy might remain in you" (John 15:11). Although we have emphasized the point, we repeat it again in this connection: Here is a joy that is really personal. Here is no mere abstraction or objective concept. There may be measured satisfaction in the contemplation of abstruse truth, but there can never be real joy in such consideration. Joy is an emotion or quality that demands personal appreciation. Here it is doubly so. It is the actual joy that Jesus possessed. His was a joy without human boundaries. It was a joy of infinite appreciation. It was a joy issuing from the complete fulfillment of the Father's will. For Him, then, to speak of the actual bestowment of His joy means much. His joy was infinite and eternal. For it was the same joy He had with the Father before the world began. Then that eternal joy became enriched and completed through His human relationship in redemptive accomplishment. Perhaps it is inconsistent to speak of divine joy finding enrichment or enlargement, but for our human understanding it can pass. It is this very joy that is now experientially transferred to the believing heart by faith. It is "my joy in you." It means the finite spirit can feel the thrill of the same personal joy that the Son of Man experienced while He did the will of the Heavenly Father on earth.

This joy is not only personal but plenteous: "that your joy might be full." The very descriptive word employed here is that of a vessel brimming full and running over. And truly His joy is plenteous. Within the heart there is always that constant sense of satisfaction which comes from a sense of adequacy. There is no lurking fear that some way this joy will fail. Rather it is like the cruse of oil that does not fail throughout the famine of human need. It is the joy that comes from experiencing the limitlessness of divine resource. The Psalmist expresses this joy in his exultation of the abundance of divine favor when he said, "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Psalms 130:7). The thrill that the world holds is always fraught with an intuitive fear of its early dissipation. This is why the world fights so feverishly to hold the passing thrills it finds, for it knows that somehow they will soon be gone. But here is a joy that stands unchanged with passing time. The heart is constantly reminded that the source of this joy is the Eternal One, who once said to Abraham of old, ". . . I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1). He is the almighty, outpoured One, with whom there is no restraint or limitation.

Lastly, this joy of His will is permanent, "that my joy might remain in you." Here is the divine commitment that, while obedience remains and trust continues, His joy will remain. And finally, the day will come when this joy will issue into an eternal finality. Then it will be eternal in reality. It will be His joy forever throbbing, singing on into the endless ages.

This, then, is the joy that He offers all who will become grafted into the Living Vine, who will seek the purging of their hearts so that His joy may flow unhindered and fully with all of its wonderful content. A joy that is personal, plenteous, and permanent will remain with them forever.

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10 -- THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF HIS WILL

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth (John 17:19).

It is by no means a new approach, but it is a justifiable one, to reiterate a previous statement. The words that men utter when they consciously near the end of their earthly life inevitably reveal the hidden motives of their hearts. Jesus was already under the ominous shadow of the cross He had long anticipated. And now He poured out His heart to the little company of followers who had remained with Him to this tragic hour. This great and high priestly prayer that John records is truly the Lord's prayer. Here we read the recorded words of John Father, the hour is come... I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do . . . I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.... I pray for them: I pray not for the world.... While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.... Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. . . ." (John 17:1-17).

Here Jesus bares His heart afresh before the Father, while He unhesitatingly reveals to this wondering band of followers the infinite sweep of His purpose. It is here that Jesus comes to grips in prayer with the very heart of redemptive purpose. It is that this little band of loyal followers may find personal release from the grip of inward sin. Jesus well knew that He was fulfilling prophecy in that He was now coming to the final end of His purpose of destroying the works of the devil. He was now being fully manifested to this end. He was indeed the very One who would bear away the sin of the world, for centuries typified by the scapegoat being led away by the high priest. And now it was all coming to pass, and the end of it all-that man might be completely redeemed and fully delivered from sin.

Nor was the scope of His prayer to be restricted to this little band who heard Him pour out this passionate petition. He said in the same prayer, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word" (John 17:20).

There is one clear meaning in this prayer of our Lord. It was that this first group of believing followers, as well as all those who should find the same faith through the coming centuries, should be delivered from sin. A redemptive plan which, in the light of all the facts, does not include such a complete deliverance can hardly be called redemption. But it is not our purpose here to discuss these implications of the prayer of Jesus. Rather, we would attempt to make clear the ultimate purpose of His will for us through holiness of heart.

To catch the full force of redemptive purpose, we must view it against eternal horizons. For us to think of redemption merely against the background of time is not enough. True, redemption even in such a limited setting is thrilling and marvelous; but only when we think of the plan of God from eternity to eternity do we have the full scope of His purpose. Paul, in his Ephesian letter, reveals through the Holy Spirit these eternal horizons. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.... that in the dispensation of the fulness of times

he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth: even in..... that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ" (Ephesians 1:4, 5, 10, 12). We readily admit that much that Paul utters here is beyond human comprehension. The sweep of this concept from eternity to eternity is breath-taking. Nonetheless, it is all contained in the ultimate purpose of divine will as it comprehends our eternal salvation.

Clearly contained within these eternal horizons of purpose are some concepts that the mind can grasp and we can at least partially understand. Hence, in this concluding brief chapter of this book in which we have tried to convey in some measure His will for us, we consider its ultimate purpose. In the picture of the purpose of His will for us in this final sense are included the unity of this eternal fellowship, the revelation of His eternal glory to those who have followed His purpose clear through, and a final relationship of eternal fellowship.

Men have cheapened this concept and narrowed its horizon by attempting to teach the unity of the earthly Church. It is not our purpose to discuss this aspect of truth other than to say there is no clear intimation in scripture that Jesus ever assumed His earthly Church would even be one in organization. The true Church will always be one as an organism; but this very organism, the body of Christ, will undoubtedly be taken from among the many denominations of earth. No, this was not what Jesus meant in His prayer for His ultimate will for us. He meant, rather, a mystical and spiritual unity which, begun here and now, will have its final issuance in a glorious unity suited to the eternal realm where it will be eternally perpetuated.

To the careful reader it is clear that God made man in the beginning for personal, intimate fellowship. That frustrated fellowship because of sin is to be restored and enlarged in its eternal sphere of purpose. Since it is to be eternal, it cannot be based upon compulsion but rather upon love. God's love reaches out for a finally restored fellowship with His creature. This love wins those who heed; and through faith all who willingly accept have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby they exultantly cry, "Abba, Father." This is the threshold of this eternal fellowship foundationed in the reciprocity of love, which guarantees its possibility of eternal existence. The relationships implied are suggested in other scriptural hints, such as, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ . . . (Romans 8:16-17). Here is the fellowship of a family with all of its intimacies implied. "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:6-7). Earthly analogies can convey much, and in this instance they do; but even then it is impossible for them to hold all the sweep of intimacy which God implies, because of the limitations of human language.

It is a fellowship of unique unity: "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). Here He suggests the tremendous influence this unity will have upon a gainsaying world. But we know that this same unity will be projected into an eternal setting. We repeat, here is a fellowship of unity that is unique. The same Spirit who inhabits my life also dwells within other believers. Hence we find ourselves brought together into a vital unity because the same Divine Personality which inhabits one inhabits the other. But this unity is not restricted to one member of the Trinity. The entire Triune God shall inhabit these personalities of ours, so that, when the

limitations of flesh are finally removed, there will exist a unity of personality in eternal fellowship which our minds cannot now grasp. And this is all a part of the ultimate purpose of His will for us. Meantime, as one modern writer has put it, we are privileged by this intimate fellowship with the Spirit to be built into the body of Christ that we look out on the present world from within this relationship.

This final purpose of His will includes the manifestation of His glory to those who loved Him to the end. We cannot at this time go into a discussion of the Shekinah of God. We can but remind you that there is a glory of His presence that invests the eternities. But though sin our vision of this glory is forbidden and impossible. It was without doubt this blazing glory that stood at the entrance of the Garden after man's expulsion. It was this dreadful Presence which forbade man's re-entry into his first sanctuary of earthly existence. It has only been at infrequent intervals that God has deigned momentarily to reveal passing glimpses of His glory. Moses, sensing his desperate need of divine assistance, cried out, ". ... I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" (Exodus 33:18). One need only turn to the record and learn the answer of God to this heart cry of a man. But even then Moses could see the passing glory only from the rear. When the Temple was finished, the glory of His presence came with such overwhelming power that those who ministered within had to flee for their very lives. The Scriptures' declaration that "our God is a consuming fire" is but to say that He is a God of infinite glory. His holiness is so consuming and complete that it blazes forth, destroying all impurity in its wake.

Man did once walk with God in the Garden in the cool of day, but that was before the awful tragedy occurred. Created in the very image of Deity, man knew the glory of His presence. He could bear it then. It is within God's eternal purpose and will that once again man shall be so fully redeemed that he can again live in joyous fellowship with his God in the fullness of His glory. This was the intimation of Jesus that day within the fastness of the mountain when He was "transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). And this manifestation was only a partial revelation. Those with Him could not have lived had Christ blazed forth in all His glory. John on Patmos caught a momentary glimpse of His eternal presence. "His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace

(Revelation 1:14-15). Here inadequate human language and limited human faculties have attempted to portray the passing glimpses they have had of His glory. Some have known in their own experiences those brief moments of a partial revelation of His glory until the ecstasy was such that they were compelled to cry out for God to cease, lest they die.

All of these facts hint at the glory He intends to reveal according to the eternal purpose of His will for us. The day will come, for all who keep the faith, when infirmities shall slip off like a loosened cloak and this mortal shall take on immortality, lifted then into the blazing light of His holy presence to abide with His eternal will forever.

There is but one other part of this eternal purpose of His will for us we shall consider, and that is the thought of abiding in His presence forever. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am" (John 17:24). It is not difficult to understand, at least in part, this cry from the heart of Jesus. He asks the Father that those whom He has redeemed with His own

blood may dwell with Him in His presence forever as a memento of His earthly triumph. The mother is always loath to relinquish personal hold upon the one to whom she has given birth. Some of the problems in the field of human relations have come from this normal sense of human possessiveness. But if human mothers can feel thus toward their children, how much more does Christ feel toward those whom He purchased with His own blood! For it was for all who have heeded His love and call that He entered into His humiliation for us. "Though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (II Corinthians 8:9). His sacrifice surpasses that of man. It was He who entered into the very jaws of death. With His infinitely understanding nature He exposed himself to the worst of taunt and torture. Having given thus for man, it is but natural that He claims the presence of all whom He redeemed to dwell with Him forever. They are to become His glory in the eternal ages. The presence of His bride, the Church, will enhance triumph and honor. He will present His bride to the Father in complete vindication of His earthly journey.

We must not forget, however, that the ultimate purpose for those who serve Him can only be realized through hearty obedience to His call to the experience and life of holiness. All that is to be worked out in eternal purpose for His Church has its essential foundation in a personal experience of heart purity. Jesus prayed that they might be sanctified, i.e., made pure within. It is inconceivable that without such a moral adjustment with a holy God one could presume to live in the presence of His eternal glory or find contentment in the presence of the Christ whose love demands our all. It was all for this final, eternal purpose that Jesus sanctified himself (i.e., deliberately surrendered himself to the cross) that we might in deed and truth be made holy and thus prepared for the holy environment of His eternal presence. This is, in truth, His will for us.

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THE END