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THE TRIUMPH OF HIS PLAN
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THE TRIUMPH OF HIS PLAN

Text: Acts 15:18: Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.

Some Christians have experienced great difficulty in reconciling the doctrine of man's free agency and God's foreknowledge. In like manner man's sinfulness and the success of God's plan seem incompatible to some. Rejecting the extreme fatalistic view which forced its adherents to believe that the damnation of some souls was as much God's plan as the salvation of others, some people have come to fear lest the plan of God should be thwarted by the schemes of hell and the unworthiness of man.

The ungratefulness and sinfulness of man in making improper use of his free agency is to be sincerely deplored, yet, it is not to be thought that by any exercise of his will the creature can hinder the final accomplishment of the Creator's purpose. The creature may succeed in placing himself outside the plan and will of his Maker so that he himself shall suffer eternal rejection, but God will find another to fill the vacancy and will go on with His original purpose. Saul was rejected from the kingdom because of disobedience, but God sent His prophet to anoint the youngest son of Jesse to be king in his stead. Judas, by transgression, fell from his part in the ministry of the Son of God, but another was found to take his place and the church was established.

In reading the divine history of creation, nothing appears more clearly than the fact that man was made with a higher destiny than simply to fill out a few days of mortal existence and then pass into oblivion. His being made in the divine image bespeaks God's intention of taking him into His fellowship; and the few glimpses of Edenic life which are given confirm this expectation. How glorious the spectacle to behold man communing with his God, and that without fear! The beginning of such bliss caused the morning stars to sing and the sons of God to shout for joy. Here we behold a scene so fully up to the divine expectation that His approbation can be fitly expressed only in those meaning words, "very good."

But Satan came; man listened to the tempter's voice and betrayed his Father's trust. Then how changed was the aspect of Him Who had just given His creature all the world to possess and had added His blessing! "So he drove out the man, and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims. and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life."

While it was yet morning in the day of man his sun suddenly sank into the sea of judgment and left him groping in the night of sin. When Jehovah had yet scarcely witnessed His pleasure in the consummation of His creation, He must turn to drive the noblest of His creatures in shame from His presence.

If it is lawful to ascribe pleasure to a demon, then surely hell's inhabitants rejoiced in what seemed to them to be the irreparable spoilation of God's heritage. But there broke forth from the lips of Jehovah a threat against the serpent, to be carried out by the woman's seed, which announced the fact that the deceiver's time was short, and that in the end victory would crown the plan of God Almighty.

Doubtless Eve thought the Deliverer had come when she "got a man from the Lord," but that hope died and Cain become the murderer of the righteous seed. When the wickedness of men brought the flood upon the earth, the enemies of God were drowned, but the waters carried the ark with the chosen family above the highest hills and set it upon the renovated earth.

Satan duped the post-deluvian nations into idolatry and was about to rid the world of the knowledge of the true God, but out of Ur of the Chaldees God called a man, who became the founder of a nation whose special province it was to preserve Jehovah worship among men.

Turning to Egypt for sustenance in time of famine, Israel soon found herself groaning under the burdens of Pharaoh. To make their deliverance impossible, a decree to slay all the men children of the Hebrews was sent forth, but God touched a little babe's heart as he was lifted from his dripping crib, and while the king vainly sought throughout the land of Goshen for the one who should deliver the Hebrews, he was fostering him at Egypt's expense in his own palace.

In the wilderness apostacy, two men were found who "wholly followed the Lord" and by their hand God led the new generation into the "Land of Promise."

Rent by factions and checkered by frequent lapses into idolatry, the age of the judges is sadly disappointing. But on the verge of the nation's dissolution, God called a little boy and under

his hand brought the factions of Israel together, gave them victory over their foes and made the name of Samuel's God to be feared in all the land.

Israel traitorously demanded a king like the nations around them had, but again God overruled and Christ became David's son as well as David's Lord.

Israel had passed the meridian of her greatness as a nation and yet her mission was unfulfilled. Her sins would drag her low, then an occasional revival of her ancient fidelity to Jehovah would lift her to a position of hopefulness. At last, disgusted with her sins, God refused to speak to her anymore. Four hundred years dragged wearily by. Hope for Messiah's coming had been so long deferred that many a heart had grown sick. It seems that God had given up; no hope of deliverance for His people or for the world was in sight. But suddenly Satan's boasting was cut short, for an angel winged his way through the trackless heavens to a maiden in the hills of Galilee. Strange things occur. And suddenly the world is awakened by the triumphant shout: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Unwilling to give up the contest, Satan sought the life of the child, but while cruel executioners were robbing the arms and hearts of Bethlehem's mothers, Jesus was safe in Egypt.

The life of Christ is an oasis in the desert of the world's history, but He was not allowed to live it unmolested. His was a life of sacrifice and toil and at last he was brought to an ignominious death. Hell held high carnival when the world's Redeemer was caught in death's cruel embrace, and was sealed and guarded in a sepulcher of stone. The hearts of those who had hoped that this was He Who should have delivered Israel sank under a burden of humiliation and fear. But thank God, that dreary night had its closing, for early in the morning of the first day of the week the bars of death were burst asunder and the Prince of Life walked forth conqueror over death, hell and the grave. In spite of hell's contradiction the world's Redeemer stood forth in His majesty - the Mighty to save.

Often during the ages of the Church, it has seemed the powers of sin were about to conquer. In the early days of the Church persecution was utilized as a means to stop the progress of the gospel. At first it looked as though the plan would succeed, for soon the disciples, except the apostles, were scattered from Jerusalem. But they "went everywhere preaching the word," and in a short time Christians could be found in the most distant province and even in Rome itself. The blood of a hundred million martyrs was the seed God used with which to plant His Church in every part of the heathen world.

Failing to stop the progress of the Church by persecution, Satan next tried to shear her of her strength by seducing her into a compromise. In this he was so nearly successful that the doctrines for which the martyrs had died were soon buried beneath the rubbish of ritualism, and the original purity of Christianity was forgotten by the corrupt society of semi-heathen Rome. For a thousand years no hand sufficient to stem the tide was raised in defense of the pure gospel of Christ. But when the crisis was reached, out of the very midst of Romish corruption Luther arose to lead out the church of the Reformation. Formality finally so engulfed the new movement that it well nigh lost its identity, but out of the heart of the established church of England, the Wesleys arose to lead the true followers of Jesus on to the light of full salvation.

Drifting into the fatal tide of popularity and worldliness, Methodism departed from her founders' standard of scriptural holiness, but God who is ever rich in resources, has raised up men from all the churches who are going forth to preach a gospel of salvation from all sin.

But are we not living in perilous times? Is not crime on the increase, and are not people being born faster than they are being converted right here in America? Is not two-thirds of the world yet unevangelized? And yet the church is asleep on missions. Does not a large majority of professing Christians reject the doctrine of Bible holiness, and is not experimental religion becoming to be the exception rather than the rule even among church members? Yes, all this is sadly true. Then are we not facing defeat after all? Is it not time to despair? No, thank God. It is time for us to lift up our heads and know that "our redemption draweth nigh." These are the conditions that Jesus and the apostles said would immediately precede the return of our Lord to this earth. The morning star is rising, the day of the Lord is breaking; soon the eastern skies will be lighted with the glory of the coming of the Bridegroom of the Church, Who is coming to catch up His own and take her to His house of many mansions.

Loath to give up the conflict immediately following the coming of Christ and the rapture of the saints, Satan will bring upon the earth a reign of terror - the great tribulation, but in the midst of the carnage of those awful days, Jesus with His saints and angels will come, Satan shall be incarcerated in the bottomless pit and the earth shall have the millennium for which she has sighed so long.

At the close of the thousand years of the reign of Christ and His Church, Satan will be loosed for a little season and will go out once more to deceive the nations and to gather together an army as the sand of the sea for number. With the great hosts of Gog and Magog the old enemy of God will encompass the camp of the saints, but as in olden times the saints will only have to stand still and see the salvation of God. Fire shall come down from heaven and shall devour his forces while the tempter himself shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and shall be tormented day and night forever and forever.

Finally the great white throne judgment shall set, all destinies shall be settled, all evil shall be banished from the universe of God. God's original intention was to have man for His everlasting companion; through all the vicissitudes of the history of time He has held steady to this intention; and now we see the triumph of His great purpose. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the, former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:1- 4.)

Comparing the first two chapters of Genesis with the last two of Revelation, we see that in the final restoration every original will have its permanent antitype. At the beginning were Eden, the tree of life, the man and his wife, and communion with God. In the glorious future there will be

heaven, the tree and river of life, Christ and the Church, and everlasting fellowship and communion with God.

And now let us look up to God, Who despite every opposing power has, and will work out His plan for this great universe; and let us commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. He will make all things work together for good to them which love Him, and will bring us out at last to say, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

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THE END