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THE FISHERMAN OF GALILEE
By Harmon Allen Baldwin

A Devotional Study of the Apostle Peter

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PREFACE

The following pages have been inspired by an earnest desire to be helpful to the children of God in every place, by pointing out to them some of the gracious truths and surpassing beauties of the word of God; and with the hope that we may thus encourage men to drink more deeply and with true devotion of that living stream which shall eventually cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

H. A. B.
Cleveland, Ohio

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01 -- THE ELECT OF GOD

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through

sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." -- 1 Peter 1:1, 2.

"Peter an Apostle of Jesus Christ." -- This is Peter the poor, humble, unlearned fisherman, but he had seen Jesus. He had seen Him by the seaside, he had been with Him in the ship on the storm-tossed sea, and had marveled at His power; he had seen Him walking on the waves of Galilee, and when about to sink in his attempt to do the same had felt the power of that almighty hand holding him up; he had walked with Jesus along the dusty highways of Judea and wondered when, at the gracious words which fell from the lips of the Son of man, lepers were healed, the blind saw, the dumb speak, the deaf heard, the lame walked, the dead were raised, devils fled, and the poor heard the gospel; he had been with Him in the mount and beheld His face shining like the sun and His raiment like light; he had beheld Moses and Elias talking with his Lord, and when he entered the cloud he had heard the voice saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Then Peter, with the others, had fallen on his face "sore afraid," but when he looked again he saw no man "Save Jesus only;" he had reclined with Jesus at the passover feast in the upper room, he had heard His parting instructions and reluctantly submitted to have his Lord and Master wash his feet; he had been with Him in the garden and had slept for sorrow of heart; he had followed far off as He was led to the judgment hall, and had denied Him only when He whom he worshipped seemed to have lost His power; he would have fought in the garden, but had been rebuked for his rashness; yes, he was with the five hundred up at Bethany and watched the Christ of his love as He ascended and was received out of sight. For upwards of three years Peter had been constantly with his Lord, sharing with Him the hardships of His humility; he had seen the vision, he had caught the spirit, he had been transformed. by the vision, from a humble fisherman to an "apostle of Jesus Christ;" he had been clothed with the power of the Spirit, and now he delighted to tell the glad news and "strengthen the brethren."

Did you ever notice the sturdy strength, both of faith and character, that resides in every line of Peter's writings? He was a man of action. He could not sit down and ecstatically gaze into the heavens-he must be up and doing. Just one time, -when he was on the mountain, he thought he would like to stay and gaze, but he was not much more than down again when his hurtling disposition manifested itself. He must do something.

To be practical, did you ever catch the vision, did you ever receive the Spirit, did you ever see Jesus? You did not walk with Cleopas to Emmaus as Jesus talked with him, feel your heart burn within you; but did Jesus go with you in the test? Did you see Him amid the lashing waves? or, with Peter, did you lose your vision when Jesus was reviled and buffeted and seemed to become like another man, and deny Him there? Did you ever ascend the mountain with Him and behold His glory? If you see Him not thus, you have no part in Him.

"To the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." What matter is it where these countries were located. If Peter wrote only to them he did not write to me. But there is one word that takes me in. From any standpoint the matter is viewed, I was and am a stranger. I was a stranger to the covenant of grace, I am now a "stranger and a pilgrim" in this world, I am seeking a city which is out of sight, and it is the hope that I may sometime reach that city which causes me so persistently to abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul."

A stranger can easily be noticed in the town. People gaze after him wondering who he can be, and he stares around in such a manner as to prove that the surroundings are all new. And this is much more the case if the stranger is a foreigner and does not understand the language or customs of the residents, or dress according to the prevailing fashions of the place. If you are a Christian you are a stranger and a foreigner in this world, you do not understand its sinful language nor fellowship its unholy customs, and the people of the world think it is strange that you run not to the same excess of riot as they and speak evil of you.

"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God." If a man is elected it is because of some real or supposed merit in him that makes him fit for that position. He cannot take his seat unless he is elected according to the law or prevailing practice. They that run in a race, run all, but no man is crowned except he strive lawfully. Thus, God has His laws according to which we must be governed or all of our running will be in vain, Jesus spoke of certain people who should cast out devils, prophesy in His name, and in His name do many wonderful works, but who should never be elected according to God's law, for, when they come to the gates of heaven and knock, Jesus will command them to depart, declaring that He has never known them. But we need not be ignorant as to whether we are lawfully elected. Peter lays down one simple rule and names two results that will inevitably follow a proper election: The rule - "elect through sanctification of the Spirit." The two results (1) "unto obedience," (2) "and sprinkling of the blood of Christ."

"Elect through sanctification of the Spirit."

Sanctification is that gracious work of the Holy Spirit by which the consecrated, believing soul is cleansed from all moral defilement, and exalted to holiness of heart and life. This then is the means by which we are elected. God made Aaron and his sons priests, the people elected George Washington president, bishops are elected by those who lawfully hold the proper franchise; if we are ever elected at all it will be through sanctification. God cannot tolerate the unclean. Judas, the son of perdition, must die; Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, must be cast out. No country would knowingly delegate authority or franchise to a traitor. Sin is a traitor, and God who knows all things demands its execution in order to a proper election. Now all the powers of the soul declare for God and strongly and joyously bear the bounding heart into God and set it triumphant on the throne of power.

But notice that the possibility of this condition of affairs is brought about only by the Spirit of God. He alone can cast out the traitors, He alone can bring the soul, so rebellious by nature, into loving submission to the divine will. He cleanses the rebellion from the heart, He changes the enemy to a friend; the sinner to a saint; He fits the temple for His own indwelling, and henceforth reigns alone

Now for the proof of our election:

(1) "Unto obedience." "Obedience is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Men are sanctified that they may fully possess the power to obey. A sanctification that does not bear this fruit or bring about this result is not of God. "Lo, I come to do thy will, oh God," was the prophetic utterance of the Psalmist: "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done," was the cry

of the suffering Christ in Gethsemane; "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," is the declaration of the sanctified soul.

A partial obedience is a forced obedience, and a forced obedience is not, acceptable to God; a full obedience from a heart filled with love is the only form of service the Lord can smile upon. To be sure I will make mistakes, and there is no doubt but that in my most complete submission I will often miss the divine intent, but God is gracious and will fill out my unintentional deficiencies with mercy, and let me go free.

(2) "Sprinkling of the blood of Christ." There are two sides to this sanctification. Man's obedience, and God's sprinkling of the blood. Some stop with man's part and are never elected; but some go on until their panting souls touch the blood, or, rather, are touched by the blood, and they are thus made -every whit whole. It is not by works of righteousness that we ascend to God our best works without the blood are filthy rags; but we reach God by obedience and a living faith on our part, which, through some mysterious power, produce or bring about an application of the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. When the destroying angel saw the blood on the doorpost of an Israelitish home, even in the midst of doomed Egypt, he passed over that house.

"Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." An apostle's idea of blessing. Not an increase of wealth, or honour, or power; not prestige or position, but an increase of grace and peace. Not by the slow process of addition but by the rapid development of multiplication. What a great heart Peter had! Such men as he, generally have a large vision. He could embrace an opportunity and finish the job while the other disciples were getting ready. There was much of the intuitive, as men would say, but of the divine, as God would say, in his make-up. Jesus commended him for his quick grasp of divine truth that revealed things unseen, and said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Now he catches a glimpse of the things in store for us, and with a fisherman's simplicity prays that we may receive them. "Grace" and "peace," favor and blessing. What more could we ask I With these we become children of grace and "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

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02 -- BEGOTTEN OF GOD

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."
-- I Peter 1:3

Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, had great reason to be thankful. If the forgiveness of small debts should cause gratitude, surely he who with an oath declared he did not know Jesus, if forgiven, should be doubly grateful. Oh, that look of melting tenderness that Jesus gave Peter! The already crushed and sorrowful heart of the erring disciple was so completely broken that he went out and wept bitterly. With God there is forgiveness. To err -- to sin -- is human, to forgive is divine. Then, sorrowing one, look unto Jesus and be saved.

A clean heart is a thankful heart. It is impossible for one who has been cleansed to truly view the mysteries of redemption without being astonished at the wonders and graces which are hidden there. Paul cried in ecstasy, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Having given us a glimpse of the possibilities of grace, and the method of their attainment, Peter breaks out with the exclamation, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why should he bless God? Why should I bless God? He leads my soul into deep waters, He hides His face when it seems to me that I need Him most. Then why should I adore Him? All such reasonings are carnal. I will never be fully blest until I can look through the clouds and darkness and tempest and see the hand of God working for me with more tender care, with greater ability, and with deeper anxiety for my success than I, myself, could manifest had I the power to run things my own way. We think we must be always in the light; we are not happy unless our emotions are stirred; we are as covetous after and as attached to the breasts of divine consolation as an unweaned child; without it we become fretful and peevish, and are inclined to blame God for withholding our rightful bounty. God wants us to be men in wisdom and look more to the Giver of consolation than to the consolation He gives. If we possess the Giver we have the gift, but in spiritual matters the gift will breed worms like the manna in the wilderness if we lose the Giver. A'Kempis says, "If it be Thy will that I should be in darkness, be Thou blessed; and if it be Thy will that I should be in light, be Thou again blessed. If Thou vouchsafe to comfort me, be Thou blessed; and if Thou wilt have me afflicted, be Thou blessed also."

I do not desire to argue the question of the eternal sonship of Christ, enough for me that the Father calls Him His beloved Son. As the heavens are higher than the earth that far do the wisdom and ways of God excel the wisdom and ways of man. God spake light into existence, but I know not how; God made the world from naught, but I know not how; God, by His almighty power, keeps the universe running in perfect harmony, such power is too wonderful for me; God made bare His right arm and brought salvation to a sin-wrecked world, from chaos He brought forth order, from uncleanness purity; I stand in awe before this miracle of eternity and cannot comprehend. If I must confess my dullness of vision concerning these matters, I must also concerning that other great mystery, the incarnation of Christ and His eternal sonship. I bow before Him, confess my lack of comprehension, believe and worship

"Who according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again." God, the Father, is the great source of spiritual good. We are too much inclined to look on Him as angry with us and so revengeful because of our sins that He will not be approached; and to think of Jesus as the personification of mercy coming to turn aside the Almighty's thunderbolts that we should not die. Such a view makes the Father a being of terrors, it robs Him of His great attribute of love and clothes Him with vengeance. John says that God (the Father) so loved the world that He gave His Son for our redemption. This salvation is a conception of the Father of lights the Giver of every good and perfect gift. He manifested His love by giving the greatest gift eternity possessed, He wounded His own Father-heart that He might heal us eternally. There was only one way to save the lost, and God's love found that way. He sacrificed His Son because He must be sacrificed or we must die eternally.

Mercy is an attribute of God which is brought into existence because there are beings who are needy. Until weakness was manifested in the fall of beings which might be helped, mercy did not exist. We do not know where mercy was born, but we do know it was manifested in that our first hour of need, when God said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." To Moses, God proclaimed Himself merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Oh, how needy we are! Born in sin and shapen in iniquity, going astray as soon as we are born, not only aliens by birth, but sinners by choice, for God declares that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Sin like a millstone would drag us to hell, but the mercy of God, manifested in the person of Jesus Christ, came to our rescue.

Mercy found us in the "slough of despond," and, lifting us up, set our feet on the Rock.

"Plunged in a gulf of deep despair,
We wretched sinners lay,
Without one cheering beam of hope,
Or spark of glimmering day.

"With pitying eye the Prince of Peace
Beheld our helpless grief,
He saw, and, oh, amazing love;
He flew to our relief.

"Down from the shining seats above,
With joyful haste He fled;
Entered the grave In mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead."

Men give grudgingly either from a spirit of stinginess or because of a lack of means, but God, out of a storehouse of unlimited possibilities, gives abundantly. The measure of His giving is not circumscribed by a lack of willingness or by a lack of wealth. The cattle on a thousand hills belong to Him, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the sea and they that dwell therein; every star in the universe, from the nearest to the most remote, claims God as its owner; angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim delight to do Him honor; heaven is His, He paves its streets with celestial gold, builds its walls with jasper, its gates with pearls, and its palaces are studded with gems more costly and beautiful than anything of earth. If we need help, help has been laid on one that is mighty; if we need wisdom, He gives to all men liberally; if we need temporal blessings, He has promised to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory; if we need grace, He will make all grace abound toward us. Then why should we want? The young lions do lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. "My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day."

Of "His abundant mercy He hath begotten us again." We were dead in trespasses and in sins, we were children of the devil, but by His divine power, and through His marvelous mercy, He has resurrected us from the dead and made us children of God. Without this spiritual resurrection we can never see God in peace. Were you ever thankful for the possibility of seeing God? Man is fearfully and wonderfully made. Although so fallen and so defiled he still has powers

possessed by no other earthly being. The spirit of the beast goes downward into the earth, but the spirit of man, created to live forever, may drop this mortal clay and mount to heaven's highest glories.

About six or seven hundred years ago there was a great church congress in the city of Kostinitz. One day two of the bishops who were riding in the country saw in the distance a shepherd weeping. Approaching him they asked the cause of his distress. The man pointed to an ugly toad in the grass, and said, "When I saw that toad I felt so grateful that God had made me a man instead of such an animal, and I remembered that I had never thanked Him for it, and I weep on account of my ingratitude." How strange that I, an immortal spirit, created for the enjoyments and felicities of heaven, should be satisfied with earthly good!

Notice, again, that this new birth is a personal matter, and that Peter speaks of it as having been actually received. "God has begotten us again." Some are inclined to place all the blessings beyond the river, others would leave them all with the apostles, but God has blessings for each individual if he will but put himself in the proper attitude to receive them.

"Hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." According to the word of God, John the Baptist lived for no other purpose than to be the forerunner of Jesus; when this end was accomplished he died. God told Jeremiah that before he was born He had sanctified him and ordained him a prophet unto the nations. Cyrus the Great, the conqueror of Babylon, although history reveals the fact that he was a cruel and bloodthirsty tyrant, was appointed by God to fulfill His purposes. One hundred seventy-six years before the prophecy was fulfilled, God, through the prophet Isaiah, called him by name and said, "Cyrus is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundations shall be laid."

The apostle gives us to understand that when we are begotten again this birth is for a purpose. We are not saved to waste our powers in idle dreaming, we are not saved for the sole purpose of drinking in, even here, the pleasures of the Lord; we are not saved that we may spend our time ecstatically gazing into the heavens; and, again, we are not saved that we may simply escape hell and gain a home in heaven; but, on the contrary, we are saved not only for our own benefit, but that we may also be a blessing to others. God desires that we shall live so holy and justly and unblamably in this present evil world that others may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Faber says:

"Oh, that I could waste my life for others,
With no ends of my own;
Oh, that I could pour myself into my brothers,
And live for them alone."

The apostle declares that we are begotten again "unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Hope is that grace which bears up the soul, giving it buoyancy and gladness amid the sorrows and disappointments incident to this life. Without hope men must fall into utter despair. Hope can change a field of defeat into a field of opportunity.

But many indulge what they fondly think is hope which is indeed no hope or at best a dead hope, but the hope of a Christian is "lively." False religion worships a dead Christ, it changes the truth of God into a lie; but our Christ has risen again, and because He lives we live also. This new life is made possible only by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. If He has not risen our hope is vain. But that He has risen, every soul that has passed from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness can testify, for he has felt resurrection power coursing through his soul, lifting him from the things of earth to the things of God, giving him an assurance which is big with immortality, and filling him with a strength that enables him to go forth and conquer every enemy. This hope is an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and enters into that within the veil.

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03 -- THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" -- I Peter 1:4.

When the rich young man, his heart filled with anxiety concerning eternal things, came running and kneeled before Jesus with the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" the Lord's answer puzzled the disciples. And as He further conversed with them after the young man had departed in sorrow, telling them that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven, the disciples marveled. Peter, who perhaps until now had never stopped to count the cost and to ponder the result of leaving all to follow Jesus, broke out with the statement and the question, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; What shall we have therefore?"

What minister of the gospel, who has recklessly ventured all on the Lord and in the Lord's work, has never run into this same question? When he has felt the pangs of disease, and has been haunted with the nightmare of "going away" to leave his wife a widow and his children orphans, his heart has more than once asked, "What shall I have? What shall I get for all this sacrifice? Who will care for these if I am taken away?"

Jesus did not rebuke the anxiety of Peter. His was a legitimate question. He was, as far as we know the only one of the disciples who was married, and he would naturally be the one who would be tempted to uneasiness concerning the future. The young man can smile at the other's cares; the man who has plenty can harshly accuse the poor man; but Jesus did not do this, He gave an answer that was satisfactory to the questioner.

He first gave them, as His apostles, the promise of eternal blessings: "Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel;" and then followed with that wonderful promise of temporal blessings to everyone who should forsake all for His sake, saying, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit eternal life."

King's children are born to be princes and kings. The throne and royal honor by those who believe in the "divine rights" of kings, are acknowledged as their inalienable possession. He who

would dethrone them and take their place is called a usurper. The children of rich men inherit the goods of their father; and he who would deprive them of their rightful possessions is called a criminal. Real Christians, those who are begotten again, those who are born from above, are heirs to an inheritance, and in the ownership of this inheritance they are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. God gives His gifts to all men; He causes it to rain upon the unjust as well as upon the just; but the inheritance is for none but His children. Concerning the person who would willfully attempt to deprive one of His children of this inheritance, God says it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he be drowned in the depths of the sea. After we have borne the burdens of life, and, in Jesus' strength conquered our last enemy, then we shall receive our inheritance. We can have only an earnest here, a foretaste that draws us on with great desire for the obtaining of the full fruition.

Four things are said of this inheritance. It is (1) "incorruptible," (2) "and undefiled," (3) "and that fadeth not away," (4) "reserved in heaven for you."

(1) An object is corruptible which may decay or perish as, the human body; it is corrupt when it has lost its original soundness, integrity or purity, as corrupt flesh, corrupt practices, corrupt judges. Corruption is decay, decomposition, or putrefaction. These terms are used in their strict sense concerning matter which may by a process of decay or putrefaction become so deteriorated as to lose its original purity and uprightness, and thus become unfit for its intended use. This element is not some foreign substance clinging to the outside, but is caused by the decay and decomposition of the essential elements of the thing itself.

The Christian's inheritance is incorruptible. It will never decay, or putrefy, or in any sense of the word deteriorate. Some of our earthly possessions must be guarded with great care or they will spoil and so become unfit for use, but the inheritance which God gives, to the end of eternity, will remain pure and wholesome. How strange that an immortal soul, before whose eyes such glories are displayed, and into whose possession such riches are given, should turn away and seek for vanities, things that perish with the using, trifles that may become corrupt before they can profit in the least. If you would allow your soul, which is now, by your own willfulness, engulfed in a sea of amazing corruption, to pierce the veil of self-imposed blindness, it would become so ravished at sight of heaven's joys and incorruptible glories, that with pious Monica you would cry, "Wings! Wings!"

(2) A thing is defiled when it is made foul or impure, when it is filth or dirty, as a dish; defilement is pollution, foulness, dirtiness or uncleanness. These terms refer strictly to outward pollution. The essential substance of which the thing is composed may be as wholesome as ever, but it is covered with dirt or filth.

Nothing will ever approach the inheritance of the Christian which will defile or contaminate it. John says that whosoever is born of God keepeth himself and that wicked one toucheth him not. Satan, in his reasonings with God, declared that Job was surrounded with a hedge through which no evil could come to him. God's saints are protected with a wall of fire, and He is the glory in the midst; the angels of the Lord encamp about them to deliver them; as the mountains are about Jerusalem so is the Lord about His children; the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are safe.

If God so protects His people from defilement here, it stands to reason that He will keep their inheritance from pollution. In the Book of Revelation, He declares, "There shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." Thank God, here is one place in the universe where the saints are safe, and will be forever safe.

"No chilling winds or poisonous breath
Can reach that healthful shore;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more."

(3) It "fadeth not away." Nations have come and gone; kings have worn their crowns with pomp and splendor, but their bodies are moldering in the dust; mighty men and chief captains have crushed the people under their iron heels, but have, themselves, been forced to yield to the grim reaper, death; cities, built by man as though they would stand forever, are gone, and some of them are now giving up their buried secrets to the spade of the archeologist; years come and go; our days fly in and out like the weaver's shuttle; springtime with blossoms, and birds, and gladness; summer with sunshine, and glory-clad fields, and autumn with its fruition and plenty, are followed by winter with its frosts and chilling blasts, its desolation and winding sheet of snow and ice. We spend our lives as a tale that is told; the cry of the infant, the merry ripple of childish mirth, the buoyancy of youth, the cares of manhood, the frosts of age; then a lowly mound and spectral stone tell of departed hopes and an empty home.

Such is our inheritance in this world. But the inheritance God gives "fadeth not away." Its mighty glories will eternally ravish the soul of their happy possessor; this gift, like the bountiful Giver, is eternal. George Nitsch says, "The fount of all blessedness is to be found where the mighty Jehovah dwells, from whose presence constantly flow such varied streams of unutterable joy upon body and soul that the bliss is as sweet at the end of millions of years as it is the first moment a man enters heaven.

(4) "Reserved in heaven for you." Most of us are naturally spendthrifts. When we see a thing we desire we will make most any sacrifice to obtain it. We have great difficulty in seeing beyond the present and its enjoyments. Some of us go so far as to even forfeit future good for present pleasure, future joy for present happiness, and future heaven, for worldly honors and wealth.

God, realizing this propensity in man, allows us to have only an earnest of our inheritance here and reserves the principal, the thing itself, till we get to heaven. It is strange how lavishly we would scatter abroad even our spiritual blessings if we could. There are two striking examples in the Bible. When God told Moses to stand aside and He would destroy the Israelites and make of him a greater nation, Moses threw himself in the gap between an offended God and an offending people, and said, "If Thou wilt forgive their sin; -- and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of the book which Thou hast written." God heard the desperation of Moses' prayer and spared the people, but would not blot him out, for He said, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out."

The other case is that of the Apostle Paul, who, because of his great heaviness and continual sorrow, declared, "I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."

Thieves may take our inheritance here, but that inheritance moth cannot corrupt nor thieves break through and steal. Others cannot appropriate it to their purposes, it is reserved for the rightful owners, safe in the Almighty's keeping.

Concerning the glories which shall be fully revealed only in the other world, Nathaniel Culverwell says, "-Man you know is ordained to a choicer end, to a nobler happiness, than for the present he can attain unto, and therefore he cannot expect that God should now communicate Himself in such bright and open discoveries, in such glorious Manifestations of Himself as He means to give here after. But he must be content to behold these infinite treasures of reserved love, in a darker and more shadowy way of faith, and not of wisdom... The most that man's reason can do, is to fill the understanding to the brim; but Faith, that throws the soul into the Ocean, and lets it roll and bathe itself in the vastness and fullness of a Deity."

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04 -- KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD

"Who are kept by the power of God." -- I Peter 1:5.

Peter may have meant all right, but he trusted the wrong person. He loved Jesus with all the power of his impetuous heart; his life had become so knit to the life of his divine Master, that, like many others, he thought nothing could sever them; but, alas, he trusted Peter instead of Christ, and Peter was a very insecure foundation. His impetuosity which, when rightly directed, made him a leader for good, if wrongly directed, would send him just as swiftly in the other direction.

No man can trust his own natural heart. It is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?" The unenlightened mind is constantly misinterpreting the movements of the soul. It is a common thing to hear a proud person boasting of his humility, for a stingy, man to talk of his own liberality, or for a vile person to forget his own defects and display the defects of others. The writer will never forget the picture in an old reader of a miserable little hunchback jeeringly pointing at the hump on the back of the man walking ahead of him. The wise man declares that "all the ways of a man are right in his own eyes."

By overestimating his own strength, Peter got out of connection with the source of true strength. Thrown back on his own resources, like the rest of us would be, he was as weak as water. When he saw his weakness without Christ, weeping bitterly, he returned to his source of power.

But it takes more than the sight of one's own filthiness to cause true repentance. This comes when our vileness is contrasted with Christ's loveliness, our unholiness with Christ's holiness, our weakness with His strength. When our sins are seen as a millstone eternally dragging us from God into awful and enduring corruption, we are ready to cry, "What shall I do? "

When Peter beheld the sufferings of Christ his own sufferings looked insignificant. My brother, are you discouraged? Do the burdens of life press you sorely? Do the crosses you bear cause the tears to flow unbidden down your cheeks? Then "consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Here is strength, here is keeping power.

John Flavel says, "Are you staggered at your sufferings and the hard things you must endure for Christ in this world? Doth the flesh shrink from these things, and cry, Spare thyself? What is there more likely to fortify thy spirit with resolution and courage than such a sight as this? Did Christ meet the wrath of man and the wrath of God too? Did He stand with unbroken patience and steadfast resolution under such troubles, and shall I shrink for a trifle? Ah, He did not serve me so! I will arm myself with the like mind."

A sight of the wonderful compassion of Christ who turned and looked with such melting tenderness on His erring disciple broke the heart of Peter till he went out and wept bitterly. How he was disappointed in himself! How his own strength was shown to be weakness! How he must, in spirit, have crowded up close to his suffering Master in that hour! Let us venture the assertion that he never lost connection again: this was his lesson in the vanity of self-reliance and the necessity of the keeping power of God.

"Reserved-for you, who are kept by the power of God." The inheritance is only for those who are "kept." The inheritance is "reserved" or kept for a people who in their turn are kept. The same great heart of love that is keeping you is reserving your inheritance. What a day of glad surprises there will be when the great Lover of souls brings the two together! Then the dark things shall be plain, and we shall go in to our glory never to come out again.

"But angels themselves cannot tell
The joys of that heavenly place,
Where Jesus is pleased to reveal
The light of His heavenly face:

When, caught in the rapturous flame
The sight beatific they prove;
And walk in the light of the Lamb,
Enjoying the beams of His love."

God has special blessings for His children; among these, one of the greatest is His keeping power. There is not another religion in the world that even remotely professes to keep its votaries from sin. Imagine a disciple of Mohammed, or Buddha, or Confucius, no matter how pious, exclaiming, "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded, that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." The very thought of such a thing seems so absurd that it almost causes one to smile. (Some who call themselves Christians would like to place the Christian religion on the same low plain of powerlessness and inefficiency as heathen religions. If you do not desire to be guilty of such a sin, never say again that God is unable or unwilling, nor that He does not keep His children from sin.) The reason of this power of Christianity lies in the

fact that in its conception, its origin, its workings, its essential composition, it is divine. It is not simply an emanation from God, having God as its author but now existing independent of Him, but it carries with it the power of God, nay, more, God Himself. Jesus did not say, "I go away and leave my word with you," but, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Oh, the joy -of possessing an ever-present Christ! He who dwells in Christ and Christ in him may drink constantly of divine pleasures. In a waste and desert land he may find streams of living water, and bathe his weary soul in the river that makes glad the city of God. A' Kempis says, "Christ will come unto thee, and show thee His own consolation, if thou prepare for Him a worthy mansion within thee. All His glory and beauty is from within, and there He delighteth Himself. The inward man He often visiteth; and hath with Him sweet discourses, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceeding wonderful."

Then why should we worry? Our Keeper neither slumbers nor sleeps. The almighty power of the infinite godhead is pledged to see us through. We put our money in the bank, and rest easy; but banks break up. We put our seed in the ground, and go to sleep; but seasons fail. We perform our daily tasks and give ourselves no anxiety as to the receiving of our pay; but corporations as well as individuals fail. Why can we not as well, nay, much better, trust God? His promises never fail.

"There's a heart, there's a hand,
We can feel but cannot see.
We've always been provided for,
And we shall always be.,

The whole world was destroyed by the flood, but eight persons, hidden away in the ark, rode safely over the surging waves; they were kept by the power of God. "Few and evil" were the days of the pilgrimage of Jacob (120 years at the time he said this), but in the midst of his enemies God had His hand on him for good, and even the events that seemed adverse were guided by providence, and were part of the all-wise plan in making Jacob a blessing. The cities of the plain were overthrown, but Lot and his two daughters escaped by the power of God. Paul, surrounded by enemies thirsting for his blood, in perils by land and sea, in perils among the heathen and among false brethren could say, "All things work together for good to them that love God," and, "In all these things we are more than conquerors."

The same almighty power that kept Noah in the ark, that freed Lot from doomed Sodom, that guided Jacob through his pilgrimage, that stood by Paul before angry mobs and haughty kings, is pledged to see me through; He keeps the sparrows that neither sow nor gather into barns, He numbers the hairs of my head, He says to the enemy of my soul, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further;" He says to my soul, With every temptation no matter how fierce it may seem, I will make a way of escape.

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"Kept through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." -- 1 Peter 1:5.

While Peter looked to Jesus he walked on the water; when he looked at the waves he sank. In his trouble he cried to Jesus, "Lord, save me!" Tenderly taking him by the hand, and holding him up, in gentle reproof the Lord said, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What a telling rebuke to a timid heart that would look on the waves, roll they ever so high! What a lesson to teach us that we should have confidence in God! And, again, what a marvelous display of God's power and care! No wonder, when they saw this miracle, and the wind immediately ceasing, that the disciples fell at Jesus' feet and worshiped Him, saying, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God."

It is not faith, in itself, that works miracles; but it is faith through which miraculous powers are set in operation. While true faith is all but omnipotent, -- "All things are possible to him that believeth," -- yet it steadfastly refuses to attempt a spectacular demonstration of its ability and thus tempt God; but false faith -- presumption -- foolishly casts itself down from the pinnacle of the temple and is dashed, helpless, on the pavement below. Faith may be wrongly grounded and hence be powerless, but when once

"Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock,
Then 'mid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,
Nor quails before the loudest thunder shock;
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
Cries, It shall be answered, sometime, somewhere."

Faith leaves self and touches divinity. Faith leaves all else and stands alone, naked, trusting and confident, on Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages. Phillips Brooks defines faith thus, "F-A-I-T-H means, Forsaking All, I Take Him."

Faith is as necessary in pleasing Him as the confidence of a child in its parents is a necessity in pleasing them. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."

Confidence in all of God's word is a necessity in order that we may trustfully and reverently approach any part of it; for as human beings, we would reason, "If His word fails once it may always fail."

Trust in God's ability to fulfill His word lies at the foundation of all the miracle-working power of faith; for, if God cannot, because of impotence, perform any given act, how can I know that He is able to accomplish this thing for which I plead? But if I know that He is able to do, and that He desires to do, the thing for which I pray, I have strong grounds for believing that He will do that thing.

Hence, we conclude, with Wesley, that genuine trust rests on a foundation that amounts to assurance. Is not this what John means when he says, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him"? What a firm foundation upon which to rest the feet of our faith! What an assurance of faith!

Some teach that all men naturally have faith, and what all sinners need to do is to exercise powers that they already possess and they will be saved. But this is contrary to the word of God, which declares that "all men have not faith," and is one of the exploded tenets of the so-called semi-Pelagian heresy. "Faith," as well as grace, "is the gift of God," and He gives to all men who will receive, and gives liberally.

Faith gets us into contact with God, the object of faith; faith connects us with God, the power of faith; saving faith brings into the heart and life God Himself, saving, cleansing, keeping, empowering and glorifying.

Those who claim that it is impossible to live free from sin surely take this stand because they fail to realize the power possessed by a soul whose triumphant faith touches divinity. They are judging with reference to their own unaided powers, and are leaving God and His power out of the question. If we can, in the spirit, lose confidence in our own ability to stand, and, in faith, throw ourselves into the arms of divinity, we need never fail., for underneath are the everlasting, omnipotent arms.

"Unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Some think that the apostle means to say that the salvation of which He speaks is ready to be revealed in the last time; others, that the person who has salvation is ready to be revealed either here or in the last time. The revised version reads thus: "Who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

The salvation of God saves both in this world and in the world to come. In this world we get only glimpses of its mighty glories, for, "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."

If a sight of the immortal glories of eternal salvation fail to rouse my sluggish powers to intense action that the prize may be gained, I am surely far from God. O God! win my earth-loving and heaven-rejecting self from the paltry things of time; so center and control my whole being, my affections, my desires, my ambitions, my mind, my body, my spirit, my all and in all, that they all may harmonize, like one strain in a grand orchestra, with those pursuits and tempers which make glad the angelic choirs.

Salvation, in this world, is deliverance from sin. "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Some one has said that we should not be ashamed of anything but sin. But God proposes to take away both guilt and pollution, and along with them, the shame for sin, by the incoming of His great salvation; then, they that trust in the Lord shall never be ashamed.

But salvation in its final outcome means more than this. Let us note a few of these things.

It means deliverance from temptation. In this world our adversary, the devil, the accuser of the brethren, goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, or as an angel of light, attempting to deceive. But if the child of God is faithful he will finally and forever escape all these dangers.

Salvation means deliverance from every bodily infirmity. The poet truly says:

"No chilling winds or poisonous breath
Can reach that healthful shore;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more."

Salvation means deliverance from infirmities of the mind. Not that the saint shall ever be infinite or omniscient, but, in his sphere he will know all he should know, and will never err in judgment, for he will draw his wisdom fresh from the fount of all wisdom, and with unclouded vision will look into the face of the All-Wise.

Salvation means to exchange an earthly home for a heavenly home. Some teach that we shall not go to heaven, but shall inherit, forever, this earth; others limit our habitation on the earth to a thousand years. Be this as it may, we will all admit that if the Paradise of the saints is on this earth, the earth, of necessity, must be renewed. Some have caught enrapturing visions of a glorified earth with luxurious vegetation, bursting fruits and perfect peace; but my soul catches a glimpse of that land where the ransomed have trod, a city which hath foundations, whose streets are paved with pure gold, whose walls are jasper, and whose gates are pearls; a city which hath no need of the sun or moon for light, for the Lamb is the light of it; a city in which there is no need of houses for warmth or shade from the heat, for neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat.

Finally, salvation means eternal felicity. A happy deathbed, a glorious resurrection, a place with the glorified at the judgment, and an abiding seat at God's right hand; the companionship of angels and archangels, of the spirits of just men made perfect, and best of all, of the Man who died for us, His thorn-pierced but now glorified brow shining with heavenly radiance. With nail-pierced hands He will lead His ransomed to fountains of living water, to streams where they can drink forever of divine pleasure, and gaze eternally with enraptured vision into the face of benignant deity.

O my soul, though great thy trials, greater still thy coming joys; though great thy burdens, greater still thy coming release; though great thy sufferings, greater still thy coming glory. Then weary not, if thy hands be torn with thorns; they shall be healed with leaves from the tree of life, and be given palms of victory to wave with the glorified. Though thy lot be sorrowful and thy trials severe, these conflicts shall soon have an end; and, if faithful, thy tired brow shall be crowned with never fading garlands of victory and thou shalt shine with the light which Christ has given thee as the stars forever and ever.

Richard Baxter says: "Thou shalt never suffer thy old temptations from Satan, the world, or thy own flesh. Thy pains and sickness are all cured; thy body shall no more burden thee with weakness and weariness, thy aching head and heart, thy hunger and thirst, thy sleep and labor, are all gone. Oh, what a mighty change is this! From the dunghill to the throne! From persecuting sinners to praising saints! From a vile body to this which shines as the brightness of the firmament! From a sense of God's displeasures to the perfect enjoyment of Him in love! From all my doubts and fears, to this possession, which puts me out of doubt! From all my fearful thoughts of death, to

this joyful life! Blessed change! Farewell sin and sorrow forever; farewell my rocky, proud, unbelieving heart; my worldly, sensual, carnal heart; and welcome now my most holy, heavenly nature. Farewell repentance, faith, and hope; and welcome love, joy and praise. I shall now have my harvest, without plowing or sowing; my joy, without a preacher or a promise; even all from the face of God Himself. Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here shall I be encircled with eternity, and ever live, and ever, ever praise the Lord; my face will not wrinkle, nor my hair be gray; 'For this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, and death shall be swallowed up in victory.'"

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06 -- MANIFOLD TEMPTATIONS

"Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, it need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." - I Peter 1:6.

The fisherman of Galilee had not learned to suffer with Jesus. Mounts and miracles may strengthen one's faith in the deity of Christ, but such experiences alone will leave the feet so soft and tender that they are liable to be mercilessly torn by the thorns of afflictions. Weeping Jeremiah, up from the miry dungeon, could say, "I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath," but in spite of his anguish he could add, "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him." Delectable mountains ravish our souls and give them wings of delight; valleys of afflictions try our graces, shake up our roots, and, if we remain faithful, settle us deeper in God.

Peter had been given so many revelations that for his own good he must be tried. He had lived in the inner and most select circle of the disciples, Peter, James and John touched nearest to the heart of their Master. Simon Barjona knew and loved his Lord so well that he vowed he would never leave Him but he spoke too quick, he had not yet entered the furnace. Afflictions suddenly came heaping on and that so heavily that he slept for sorrow of heart. Now is the time, Peter, to build tabernacles; now is the time to show a practical love for the object of your affections. Can you not suffer with Him one little hour? Do you not know that a suffering love is more to be honored than a rejoicing love?

Oh, poor, weak; stumbling humanity! How apt are we, like Peter, to fall down in the furnace, and by our weakness to add fuel to the fires of our already manifold trials!

It is all right to rejoice, but we should not become so engrossed in our rejoicing that we will fail when reverses come. After all there is something in sorrows which are borne aright that is salutary and helpful to the soul.

The best frame of mind is that of entire, uncompromising resignation to the will of God. If offenses come, why should I complain and curse the rod? This rod and these offenses may be but a goad in the hands of an all-loving Father to drive me towards heaven. How do I know but that they may be a necessity to my eternal salvation? Avrillon wrote: "As the sweetest and most exquisite honey is obtained only from the sweetest and most odoriferous flowers which contain it, my lips

cannot sing hymns that shall please my heavenly Spouse, unless my heart, from whence they emanate, and which produces them, be pure, and my love for Him undivided and without alloy. Yet, O God of Purity, I cannot labor alone for the purification of this heart, because I am weak and blind. Assist me, enlighten me, to know and to cleanse the least stains which are displeasing to Thine eyes, and which escape my self-love. Sprinkle me with hyssop, that I may be clean, and that this salutary bitterness may destroy in me the taste of every sweet which comes not from thee. Wash me also with the pure waters of victorious grace, that I may become whiter than snow: or rather, Lord, send from the throne of flames and fire whereon Thou sittest, divine ardors which may instruct, enlighten, and inflame me, and which may consume in my heart even the smallest defilements with which it is stained."

"For a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." Great rejoicing in the midst of many temptations! "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing!" "Blessed are ye that mourn, for ye shall be comforted."

The apostle seems to teach that there may be times when "manifold temptations" are a necessity. Paul needed a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure, and thus lose his soul. The ancient world needed the flood; Sodom, a rain of fire and brimstone; Capernaum, which was exalted to heaven, must be brought down to hell; Jerusalem, whose pride caused her to stone the prophets and pierce the Son of God, must be overthrown; these all refused correction and perished. But not all who are humbled are thus destroyed. Moses, in the back side of the desert, humbled, but praying, met God; David, from the wilderness and eaves of Judea, arose to the throne; Paul, from a three years' sojourn in the deserts of Arabia, became the chiefest of the apostles; Joseph, in the face of fearful temptations, was true to God, and from the dungeon was exalted to royal honors; Israel came forth from Egypt's iron furnace with shoes of brass and iron and garments that lasted forty years, a terror to evil nations, and even wicked Balaam heard the shout of a king among them.

Did temptations ever heap on your soul till you feared your life would be crushed out? Did you ever try to dig your way out of the maze, turning over one layer after another with so little success that you feared you would never reach daylight? This is manifold temptations. Such trials must produce more or less heaviness.

At the foundation and as the primary cause of all temptations is the devil. As in the beginning he is still bent on the destruction of mankind, and will do all that diabolical ingenuity can contrive to accomplish his end. Unless it is his "infernal offspring," carnality, from which you are delivered if your heart is cleansed, you can have no more dangerous foe. As a lion he roars on his prey; as a tiger he crouches to spring on the unsuspecting; as a serpent he would beguile; as foaming waves of the sea he would devour the helpless; as lurking malaria he would steal away our strength; he is everything cruel and designing, no means are too low for him to use to accomplish his ends.

The needs of each individual are so varied and so often cross the rights of others that trials must come. Good people will misunderstand us and bad people will mistreat us; those who love us will flatter, those who hate will slander, and indifferent ones will pass coldly by; differences real and imaginary are sure to arise (and imaginary differences are liable to be worse than real

differences); the tendency of all this is to produce heaviness and calls for the exercise of the grace of long-suffering.

At times everything seems to go wrong, all our plans fail, our hopes are disappointed, friends shun us, foes deride us, crops fail, banks break up, our job is gone, sickness comes, death rends the family, these things and others, single-handed or by the dozen, add to the weight of temptations already too heavy for human endurance.

To all this add the natural tendency of the human mind to magnify difficulties, to listen to the devil and be annoyed by other circumstances; the natural appetites and desires clamoring for gratification, and persistence of false doctrines, and many other things, ad infinitum, which all at once come rolling over our heads like billows and threaten our destruction.

Can any soul in such a strait keep from declaring with the Psalmist, "Thou has laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast afflicted me with all Thy waves. I am shut up, and I cannot come forth "?

My brother, did you ever stop to consider that all these multiplied trials can be turned into a blessing? and that you can have so much grace that each added difficulty will only be an added reason for greater attainments?

Trials, if borne in the Spirit, soften, subdue, melt and humble the soul. Let them heap on, trial upon trial, burden on burden, misunderstandings, bereavements, sickness, weakness, and all the rest, just set your face heavenward, plant your feet on the promises and look to Jesus and you will come off more than conqueror.

The following is from James Caughey: "There are herbs, you know, whose virtue consists chiefly in their fragrance, but some of them are quite scentless and uninteresting till bruised: then they shed their perfume all around. Thus it is with many a Christian. The fragrance of his piety is never diffused abroad until he is well bruised; till

"Hell has won its will,
To wring his soul with agony!"

Our prayers and meditations,' said a good man "like hot spices, are most fragrant when our hearts are bruised in God's mortar, and broken with afflictions and troubles." When such a one, after a day or week of trial, speaks in a class or love-feast, an influence from heaven descends upon all around. I have frequently observed this, and have felt, with the poet,

"Tis even as if an angel shook his wings-
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide."

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"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire., might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." -- I Peter I:7.

At times Peter's faith assumed such proportions as to be almost audacious, and, because of his audacity, his failures were all the more apparent. But as some one has said, "It is always better to try and fail than not to try at all." Peter's faith caused him to try walking on the water. He failed because his faith faltered, but he had tried, and this was much more than any of the rest of the disciples had done. Even though he did fail to walk the waves, yet he reached the arms of Jesus, his goal, and the rest stood trembling in the ship.

Back in the nature of that humble, impetuous Galilean fisherman were possibilities which must be brought out or the greatest good could never be secured from his life. A machine is not perfected by observing and dwelling alone on its good qualities, but its weak places must be searched out and corrected. This can only be done by subjecting it to the same pressure or causing it to do the same work it must do when put to actual service. A machine may work in theory, but, like Darius Green's wings, fail when put to the test.

A man may learn theories, but grace itself is proven by trials. Peter's grace, put to the test, failed. This trial, although it was the cause of temporary loss and sorrow, was much more precious to the apostle than gold. Not that we would say that his fall was a blessing to him, but the lesson learned was one that would be remembered, especially when it had been learned at such a cost.

Trials are a necessity to bring out our best. We never know either how much or how little we amount to till we are tried. We may think we are standing ever so firmly, only to be overthrown by the smallest wind of adversity; or we may feel so weak that we fear the least approach of evil and tremble lest we should fall, when our very consciousness of our own weakness is in reality a source of strength. Paul said that when he was weak then he was strong, and that out of weakness he was made strong. Self-strength is real weakness; and acknowledged weakness, coupled with God, is strength.

Again, trials develop our graces, causing them to shine all the more brightly. Temptations to doubt, resisted in the Spirit, increase faith; temptations to hatred, successfully resisted, increase love; and temptations to depression and discouragement, bring joy and peace. Fire destroys dross but purifies gold. The fires of temptation and spiritual sorrow reveal and drive out sin, but cause grace to increase.

The trial of our faith makes us more like Jesus. God chastens us that we may be partakers of His holiness. When we are tried we shall come forth as gold. No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, but afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

The trial of our faith is more precious than gold, for gold perishes, but faith endures; gold is earthly, but faith is heavenly; gold will purchase earthly good, but through faith are we saved.

At one time men would have scoffed the idea that gold perishes, but it has been proven that the action of certain chemicals will destroy it. But that trial or fiery ordeal has never been invented and never will be invented that can overcome faith. All things are possible to him that believeth.

Trials, borne in the Spirit, have a strong tendency to blacken and mar all the trifling and alluring joys of earth, and to bring out in strong relief the joys of a life hid with Christ in God, the desirableness of a heavenly home, but most of all they produce a yearning after Christ and a melting into His love.

Looking at matters from this true point of view, why should we murmur? God's best saints have often been called upon to endure the greatest afflictions. Even so, lions' dens, fiery furnaces and foul dungeons could not alter their determination nor cause them to complain. "Even Christ pleased not Himself."

"The sweetest flower that Bethlehem e'er saw bloom,
Forth from a heart all filled with wondrous grace,
Shed never forth its richness of perfume
Till Calvary's cross upheld it in its vase."

O Christ, when shall I see Thee? When shall my weary eyes rest in the full vision of Thee when shall they see Jesus only? When shall my lips speak only of Thee and with Thee? When shall my ears, so tired of the discordant notes of earth's minors and subtones, hear the music of Thy voice? When shall my heart, so long rent and torn with warring passions or fierce temptations, rest like a dove in the bosom of Thy divinity?

Dost Thou answer that these shall come when my warfare is accomplished and my labor passed? Then I will welcome warfare, that I may shout the victory in Thee; I will hail every labor with gladness for each stroke helps to fill the measure of my task; I will lift every burden, for each burden passed brings me nearer the eternal weight of glory.

Lord, to what shall I liken Thee, as, arising from the furnace of my trials, I behold Thee, even here, by faith? Thou art the Lily of the Valley, the Bright and Morning Star; Thou art the fairest among ten thousand, yea, Thou art altogether lovely. As the Lily among thorns, as the Lamb among lions, as the Sun after midnight, as Joy after the utmost sorrow, as All Things Good and Lovely after all things evil and -unlovely, so art Thou in comparison to all things beside.

Rutherford says: "Oh! if ye knew Him, and saw His beauty -- your love, your heart, your desires would close with Him, and cleave to Him. Love, by nature, when it seeth, cannot but cast out its spirit and strength upon amiable objects, and good things, and things love worthy; and what fairer thing than Christ? O fair sun, and fair moon, and fair stars, and fair flowers, and fair roses, and fair lilies, and fair creatures; but O ten thousand times fairer Lord Jesus! Alas, I wronged Him in making the comparison this way! O black sun and moon, but O fair Lord Jesus! O black flowers, and black lilies and roses, but O fair, fair, ever fair Lord Jesus! O all fair things, black and deformed without beauty, when ye are beside that fairest Lord Jesus! O black heaven, but O fair Christ! O black angels, but surpassingly fair Lord Jesus! I would seek no more to make me happy

evermore but a thorough and clear sight of the beauty of Jesus, my Lord, Let my eyes enjoy His fairness, and stare Him forever in the face, and I have all that can be wished."

For six thousand years death, the supreme terror of the world, has triumphed. Since erring Adam and Eve knelt, weeping, by the body of their righteous but murdered son, men have ever wept at the tombs of their beloved dead. Death stalks triumphant over the battle-field, gloating as a vulture on the carcasses of the slain. Death shrieks weirdly in the storm, it roars and rumbles in the earthquake, it stealthily lurks in famine and pestilence. Death is a heartless monster. No heart, no saint, is immune to the sorrow he brings. He seizes the infant or the sage, the poor or the rich, the wise or the unwise. He wrings the heart with sorrow, seizes our brightest flowers, or steals away the prop of youth or age. He tolls the funeral dirge, digs the grave and ruthlessly destroys the home.

But Christ, at His appearing, will destroy death. Then captivity will be led captive, then death will be conquered, and life, full, joyous, and eternal, shall take the scepter of power. Till then be patient, be true, endure, and your joys shall never end.

It must needs be,
In this dark world, this world of sin and shame,
That faith be tried.
As gold, which fire destroyeth not,
But purifies from dross, so faith,
Triumphant in the fires of pain,
Decreaseth not, and faileth not in power.
From strength to strength it goes.
On eagle's wings it soars, exulting o'er the foe.
Fleet as the bounding hart, faith wearies not,
Nor faints when burdened sore with care.
Christ shall appear.
Then faith, forth from the furnace called,,
Before the throne shall stand
And by the King be praised;
And, as the universe beholds,
Christ shall its honor show;
And o'er the soul, like oil o'er Aaron's beard,
Glory and joy, celestial joy, shall flow,
And to eternity endure.

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08 -- JOY UNSPEAKABLE

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." -- I Peter 1:8, 9.

For Peter to see Jesus, was to love Him, to love Him was to worship Him, and to worship Jesus was to forsake all and follow Him. From that time Peter became a fisher of men. A proof of his apostleship was the fact that he had seen Jesus. Jesus pronounced a blessing on Thomas because he believed when he had seen but a greater blessing on the one who should believe without seeing.

Allow me to venture the statement that never a truer heart beat than the heart of the impetuous Peter. He loved his Master. When they walked together along the dusty highway, or sat by the seaside, he hung on His every word, and made the discovery that Jesus only had the words of eternal life. He loved Jesus when his eyes beheld Him, he loved Him more when He left. As far as we can discover, Peter never allowed a doubt concerning the power of his Master to work all miracles, and after he was left alone, by the power of this Christ, he himself healed the sick and raised the dead.

Impetuous love, implicit faith, tumultuous joy -- a joy unspeakable and full of glory, were characteristic of this fisherman disciple.

"Whom having not seen, ye love." Can any person be found who loves Napoleon, or Alexander, or Caesar? Can Plato, or Aristotle, or Pythagoras boast of enthralling the affections of any person of the twentieth century? More than this, do the disciples of Mohammed, or Confucius, or Buddha follow their leaders through love or through fear and frenzied fanaticism? There is no real love where the cross is not known. "We love Him because He first loved us."

Christ is not dead, but liveth forevermore. He lives today in the love of His followers as truly as when men saw Him face to face. Men will give their lives for Him, not because of some promised sensual reward in the world to come, but because they love Him and would glorify His name. How worthy is Jesus Christ of the best affections of our hearts, and how poor, in comparison, is the love we give!

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Man is so constituted that his affections must be centered on some being or thing. Different men have different treasures, but wherever these treasures may be, there is the heart. Some love money, some love houses and lands, some their homes, others pleasure and rioting. How far beneath the immortal dignity of man are all these! To love God, and all other lovely things in God, is the highest center of the affections. Augustine says, "For he loves thee too little who loves aught with thee, which he loves not for thee, O love, who ever burnest, and art never quenched! O charity, My God, kindle me! "

"In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing." Faith is not faith unless it is operative in the dark. That person who must have signs and wonders to inspire faith, is a whole-souled unbeliever; that person whose confidence in God flags in danger or disappointment, has need of strength from on high; and that person who must have gifts, blessings or revelations to

produce faith and obedience, is following Jesus for the loaves and fishes. True faith is not in things, but in Christ.

A love that grows cold, or in the least degree seeks another center, when absent from the person of its affections, is at best a poor love. Genuine love increases with distance, and glows more warmly as the days go by. True love cannot be dampened by trials and burdens. If your love for God grows cold and amid trials, temptations, persecutions, misunderstandings, sickness, or any other thing, there is an icy center, carnality, that should be removed.

God is anxious that we should love Him when most invisible; He desires that we should lean on Him when He is not to be seen; to trust Him that He will fit us for our burdens and our burdens for us. Mocking trials and bitter tears should not cool the ardor of our love. God loves and cares for us whatever the circumstances.

"Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Note the fact that no man is called upon to rejoice in a shadow, or in an untruth. Faith is not accepting an untruth with such determination that it becomes a truth, real faith touches God through Jesus Christ. Founded on Christ, really and consciously, the believer must rejoice. "Let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the tops of the mountains."

The apostle tries to express the extent of the Christian's exultation. Joy is defined as a lively emotion of happiness. But the world has all this. Can the Christian have no more? In answer the Galilean disciple doubles up the expression, and declares that we "rejoice with joy." This expresses a genuine emotion of happiness, springing up, not grudgingly or by force, but spontaneously, from the depths of the soul. This is a rejoicing that has a fountain of joy from which it springs. Some rejoicing is only on the surface, and beneath is a deep current of discontent and unrest. But this is not so. Well done, Peter. But let me ask, "Does not the world have all this? Does not the mother forget her anguish when from the depths of her mother heart springs an unbidden stream, a stream of rejoicing because of the beautiful infant son who for the first time is placed in her arms and nestles up to her bosom?" "This is not imaginary joy, it is real. Does this duplicate the Christian's privilege? Let us hear from Peter again.

"Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable." Wonderful! This begins to account for some of the strange scenes we sometimes see. Men and women clapping their hands, laughing, weeping, shouting, running, jumping, and other like manifestations. They have a joy that is unspeakable, it is inexpressible, and when they have done their best they all declare, "The half has never yet been told." But can not the world duplicate this? Peter, did you ever attend the forum and witness there the indescribable scenes of inexpressible joy when the favorite charioteer gained the day, or when the footman who was the idol of the people finished first? If you never saw those things, or parallel events, it might be well to go to the modern baseball or football game, or the political convention, or a dozen other events of every-day occurrence. We would be glad, Peter, if you would give us a promise that our joy would excel that of all these. Will you try again?

And he does. This time he introduces an element which this world does not possess. He goes to headquarters, the source from which spiritual possibilities emanate, and lays hold on a principle that grows or is produced only there, and carrying it back exultingly, he takes the hitherto

empty pitcher of earthly joy, and crowds it full, yea, he presses it down, he shakes it together, he runs it over, he fills this unspeakable joy with glory. Do you know what he means? Thrice blessed soul, thou art favored of God! Is there a vagueness in the idea of glory that is painful? Then ask God to give you to understand; and, better yet, to possess His glory.

I confess my inability to express in words the meaning of the apostle, but I am not prepared to confess my inability to understand and to possess that of which he speaks. What is glory? I answer, its definition can be known only by those who possess it? It is like the white stone in which a new name is written that no man knoweth save him that receiveth it.

There is an eternal variety in this glory-filled, heavenly joy that manifests itself in ever-varying, ever-changing, ever-new unfoldings and startling, but rapturous, revelations.

The glory of the saint of God here is the same in principle as the glory of heaven. The only difference is in the quantity and in the surroundings. The glory here is an earnest, a foretaste, a forfeit of the glory of the upper world. It is a sample given to us here, liberally and without measure, it is true, that we may know something of what God has in store for us and press forward, even though the battle is fierce or the duties tiresome. But when the full fruition is given, when faith is lost in sight, when earth gives way for heaven, when sorrows fade, when tears cease, when groans die forever from our lips, when our hearts sense the things that are prepared, when the feet of the glory-laden soul strike the streets of the celestial glory, and it feels the throbs and pulsations of the joys of heaven and joins in the anthems of saints and angels, then, and not till then, it has received to its full extent, but ever to increase, the end of faith, even the salvation of the soul."

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09 -- THE MYSTERIES OF REDEMPTION

"Of which salvation the prophets enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto us by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into" -- I Peter 1:10-12.

The all-consuming theme of prophecy, from Genesis to Malachi, from the garden to the end of Old Testament times, was "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." He was prefigured in the beast slain to clothe our sinful first parents, in the sacrifice of Abel, in the ark of Noah in the offering up of Isaac, in the scarlet thread of Rahab, in the altar, the ark of the covenant, the slain beasts and birds, and even in the lives of such men as Moses, Joshua, Samson, and David.

What a glorious privilege had fallen to the lot of our fisherman disciple to stand in the midst of the wondering throng at Pentecost and, for the first time, to proclaim to them, in no uncertain language, that the man they had crucified was the Messiah, the Prophet, the Promised of the Father. And how good of the Lord to choose Peter for the spokesman! Poor Peter's heart was crushed. He had denied his Lord. He had denied him with an oath. Bitter tears had been wrung

from his eyes. But now he is given the opportunity to in some sense atone for his failure, and, Peter-like, he is not slow in improving the occasion. Standing boldly before the very people, who had heard his denial, he proclaimed that He whom they had crucified was the Christ.

Did you ever say something to your best friend that you were sure had caused his heart to bleed; and did you ever note the thrill of joy when in some way you were permitted to set the matter right, or to prove by some self-denial the kindly feelings of your heart? If so, you can appreciate the feelings of Peter on this memorable day. Nothing but blood can wash away sin, but loyalty satisfies and soothes an injured conscience.

The prophets foresaw that a great blessing was kept in store for a future generation. They saw that this blessing had to do with salvation and the grace of God. They had realized in their own hearts enough of this grace to cause them to desire a deeper view.

As a consequence they searched diligently to find out what it was to be, when it was to be given, and the manner of times in which it should come. The figure is of a person examining closely to catch the most minute details, bringing the page nearer the eyes, stooping down as in examining ores in which precious metals are contained. This close application to the task of searching the secrets of the Almighty is no doubt represented in the stooping, inquiring attitude of the cherubim over the mercy seat. "Angels desire to look into" the secrets of God's grace and mercy to wayward men.

Oh, the rich blessings, the marvelous revelations that are forfeited by the carelessness of our search. Look closer. Stoop down. Break through any indifference that may remain, and come boldly to a throne of grace, and you shall obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. There is no wall between, the way into the holiest is open to all.

While the prophets were not rewarded with a full vision of these blessings, yet they obtained enough of the "earnest" to keep them longing and wondering. They knew God, they knew the power of grace, they knew the blessings of grace; but they were convinced that they had not received of the fullness as it should be given to future generations.

It is useless to attempt to draw the distinction in the religious experiences of the two dispensations, suffice to know that grace in its dispensational fullness was for Enoch, for Noah, for Abraham, for David, for the prophets and for John the Baptist as well as for Peter, James and John.

To shut out everyone from the blessings of the redemption of Christ until this redemption should be consummated would be to cast a suspicion upon Christ by the covert insinuation that there was in the mind of the Father a lingering doubt as to the sufficiency of His Son to meet the issue and bring salvation.

Oh, the glory of a vision of Christ! Back through the ages my soul peers, it looks closely, it stoops down, it searches. Great men are there. Nebuchadnezzar is there in his Babylonian glory; Alexander weeping for another world to conquer; Caesar, statesman, author, soldier, at the head of the Roman legions; Constantine marching to victory under the Christian labarum; Polycarp, the aged, dying for the man he could not deny; Luther putting to flight the minions of Romanism; John

Wesley with his Spirit-filled followers. Some of the persons I see are beautiful, some are repulsive. But amid the throng there shines the face of One whose countenance is more marred than any seen; He hangs between the heavens and the earth, bleeding, groaning, dying. With the prophet I exclaim, "Who is this?" The answer returns, "This is the Man who died for thee." Thank God for a mother, a Sunday-school teacher, a preacher, a Bible which told me the old, old story, which so impressed it on the scrolls of my childish mind that its memory shall never be effaced. He died that I might live.

If such a vision, looking backwards, is glorious, why should not a forward vision be glorious? When Abraham saw the day of the Son of Man, he became the "friend of God": when Moses got a vision of the Prophet like unto himself, he forsook, the throne, the glories, the riches of Egypt, esteeming even the reproach of Christ much to be preferred. When David's harp learned to sound the praises of the Lord's Anointed, he could say, "We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of God we will set up our banners." When Isaiah saw the vision he said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." Read the whole wonderful story in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He was despised, He sorrowed, He was rejected, He was afflicted, He travailed, He died.

"Stay, let me weep while you whisper,
'Love paid the ransom for me.'"

Such was the "forward" vision the prophet caught of Him who spoke in righteousness, the Mighty to save.

But these are not all who desire to fathom the mysteries of redemption. As we have seen, the cherubim overshadowing the mercy seat are intently looking that they may understand the mercy and grace of God. Although they cannot fathom yet they believe and are glad to do all they can to further the plan, even now angels are hovering around to carry back to heaven the tidings of a prodigal's return, ministering spirits linger with every saint of God to assist him in his journey to the skies, and if we are true to the end, on pinions that outfly the lightnings, they will carry us to a land of rest.

But angels can never tell the mysteries of redemption, they can never know the sweet pulsations of that joy divine which a prodigal feels when he first reaches home. There is much meaning in the expression we so often hear, "I would sooner be a redeemed soul than an archangel."

Some spend their lives bewailing their past sins. Why should this be so? True,, my sins made the blood of Christ a necessity, but, while sin is an awful thing, yet, because of sin, I have a part in Jesus Christ. Without blood I could never be redeemed, but had I never sinned I could have no part in the Savior. I did bewail my sins once, for, unconfessed and unforsaken, they separated me from God, but when the blood reached my soul I ceased to mourn, and the joy of the Lord wipes out the memories and sorrows of the past. Thank God!

Again, what a glorious privilege to preach the gospel "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven! The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy "when God laid the foundations of the earth." When Zerubbabel laid the foundations of the second temple, the people wept and shouted until the noise of the weeping could not be distinguished from the noise of the shouting.

But there is a greater privilege. God is hewing out of the granite quarries of this world living stones with which to build an habitation of God through the Spirit. The building is laid on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and He shall bring forth the headstone thereof (Jesus Christ) with shoutings, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." He gives me the opportunity to work in His quarries, to fit stones for their place in the temple. He allows me to work with Him for the salvation of a lost world!

God has a harvest field, the world, in which -there is work to do. I may not be able to work with the young men in bringing in the sheaves, but, like Ruth, I can glean in a humble place, and be rewarded with handfuls of grain. But when mealtime comes I can sit down with the reapers, Wesley, Bramwell, Finney, Luther, I can eat of their bread and dip my morsel in their vinegar, and rejoice. And in the end, while I may not receive a reaper's pay, I can hear God's "Well done" and be united with my heavenly Boaz, Jesus Christ, world without end.

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10 -- KEEPING THE HEART

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." -- 1 Peter 1.13.

It means much to be patient. There is so much to be done and so many hindrances; the pains are so severe and so persistent that it seems they never will depart; the misunderstandings seem so unreasonable that they are actually vexing; the crosses are so heavy, so bloody, so agonizing, the confinements so galling! If we could only wrench these bars away, lay down these crosses, explain these misunderstandings, relieve these pains or drive through these hindrances, all would be well. But no, the prejudices refuse to depart, the walls are firm.

Nothing but grace could enable Peter to endure. He must have his liberty. God recognized this fact, and when he was in prison sent an angel to help him out. But this impulsive nature, all right when sanctified, must be curbed or ruin will follow. In this passage Peter is wielding the two-edged sword, it strikes both the reader and the writer. Peter, himself, must learn to patiently hope to the end."

By the way, did Peter ever take time to sit down and think anything out? Did he ever study out a sermon or a course of action? Read his epistles and see how he sweeps you irresistibly, not by force of argument, but by a strong impulse, from valley to hilltop, from one mountain peak to another, never tarrying at any one place only long enough to drive one sure nail and then on. His inspiration bears the stamp of action, not of study. It savors of the freedom of the seaside, the

rolling of the tempest, the sunshine and shadows, the joys of the successes and the sorrows of the failures of a Galilean fisherman, and not of the schools.

John loved to sit at Jesus' feet or recline on His breast; he must learn to labor in the great harvest field; Peter, already filled with action, must learn to sit at Jesus' feet. How blessed to live constantly in the presence of Jesus, to be ever drinking in of the fullness of the Spirit. Brother Lawrence says, "The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament."

The Christian man's main work is stated thus by the wise man: "Keep thine heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Carefulness, sobriety and hopefulness are three things necessary in keeping the heart, and these three things are mentioned in the passage before us.

1. Carefulness. "Gird up the loins of your mind." The mind and affections of man, fallen in the general wreck, are inclined to looseness. They love to linger in forbidden fields and ponder over unholy ends, and are loath to give careful attention to solid things, especially the things of God. How easy for the natural man to retain the memory of foolish stories or circumstances, and with difficulty he retains solid matter. This weakness is augmented by the influence of chaffy, sentimental literature, classical or otherwise. Who can prove this allegation untrue?

What unregenerate man is capable of so controlling his affections that he can say, "My heart is fixed." On the contrary, his affections are continually changing, unstable as water, like the troubled sea when it cannot rest.

But if the "loins of the mind" are girded up the subjects for thought will be carefully chosen, the affections will be studiously fixed in God and heavenly things, and the whole man will be watchful and at attention.

The figure of the text represents readiness. When the prophet's lips had been touched with the live coal and his sin purged, he could quickly reply to the call to service, "Here am I, send me." If the mind is dissolutely dragging against the things of time and dabbling into the dirty pool of worldly cares and riches, how can one quickly leave all to answer the call to service? God wants minute men.

He wants men who sleep on their arms with their coats on, while they are in the enemy's country. He wants men who can never be caught ungirded.

Then, again, the girded mind is prompt and expeditious. It cares for details, but wastes no time with trifles. Generally, if you want a rush job done employ a busy man, for very often the other man is unoccupied because of his slowness and inefficiency. Talents are given the servants of God to be used, but if any man has not (does not use to profit that which he has), from him shall be taken away even that which he has, and this that is taken away shall be given to the man who already has ten talents, and improves them.

The girded mind is, as far as possible, disengaged from worldly things and pursuits. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this world, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a soldier. How any man whose head is full of worldly business and plans can make a successful soul-saver or even private Christian is a question worthy of consideration. A heart that is only partly surrendered to God is all the devil's lukewarmness is an abomination, sickening to the Lord.

A mind that is girded, by that very fact manifests a determination that is pleasing to God. No man would run a race of any importance hampered with superfluous clothing, but if he enters the lists stripped for action he shows his determination to either win or make the attempt. Determination is half the battle. Many an engagement has been lost because of a lack of purpose.

We want no cowards in our band
Who will their colors fly;
We call for valiant-hearted men
Who are not afraid to die."

A girded mind is a strong mind. It rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. Dangers and difficulties, grow insignificant to the one who dares. Such an one "... asks impossibilities, Impossibilities are given."

Weakness is manifested by languor and inaction; strength produces alertness and activity. Can you not divide the weak Christians of your acquaintance from the strong by this rule?

Finally, a girded mind is a holy mind. Separation, consecration, devotion, trueness to purpose, purity, all these and all kindred virtues, complete the grand end or purpose of salvation-likeness to God, and power to glorify and enjoy God.

2. Sobriety. "Be sober!" No intoxicated man, whether his condition is caused by strong drink or a surfeit of the world, is fit for any post that demands vigilance. Constant sobriety is the price of spiritual liberty. A drunken nation is on the verge of ruin. The professed Christian, who is so filled with the world that he says, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing," is wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, and in such a condition he is on the verge of utter ruin.

"Let your moderation be known," is the command of the apostle. Radicalism is manifested as much in extreme formality as in extreme notions of religious straightness. A formality void of the Spirit, and a rigidness void of the melting, are abominations; but if formality could be filled with life it would meet on an equal footing with rigidness melted with, love. A zealous, Spirit-filled formalism, coupled with melted, fiery radicalism, so-called, produce moderation.

Temperance is akin to moderation. The command is, "Be temperate in all things." This command is effective in fasting as well as in eating, in waking or in sleeping, in speaking or remaining silent, in work or play. In case of a doubt it is generally better to choose the side of self-denial, but this is not an infallible rule, and if continually followed would lead to asceticism. In general, in the absence of direct divine revelation, a sanctified judgment is a tolerably safe guide.

Sobriety demands humility, for the man who thinks of himself soberly is not apt to place too high an estimate on his own worth. It is generally better to err on the side of under- than over-estimation of one's own worth. Take a low seat and then if you are exalted you will have praise of those who behold, but if you take an exalted place and are abased your fall will be great.

3. Hopefulness. "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Matthew Henry paraphrases this passage thus: "Hope perfectly or thoroughly for the grace that is brought to you in, or by, the revelation of Jesus Christ: by the gospel which brings life and immortality to light: hope perfectly, trust without doubting to that grace which is now offered to you by the gospel."

Hope is the optimistic prophet of the soul. Without hope we not only become pessimistic but gloomy and even melancholy. Hope is an anchor to the soul; it reaches the steadfastness of an unseen divinity. Hope is the lifter up of our heads. Though all around is dismal and unpromising, hope clears the way to victory, and shouts its triumphs even amid defeats.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

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11 -- OBEDIENCE AND THE FORMER LUSTS

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance." -- 1 Peter 1: 14.

Peter was with the Master in the holy mount and beheld Him when the fashion of His countenance was changed and His raiment became as white as snow. What an impression this scene made on the susceptible heart of Peter! Henceforth his life must be fashioned after the life of his divine Ideal. He would be Christlike.

He suggested building tabernacles and taking up his abode in the mount, but God showed him a better way, and sent him out to preach the transfigured life to a lost world. The shining raiment of the mount were no more of an inspiration to the bewildered disciple than were the hungry faces of the multitudes at Pentecost. He beheld the visions of God on the desolate hilltop, but now he catches a vision of God's transforming power, entering, renewing, regenerating, sanctifying the hearts and lives of lost men. If the former vision is glorious the latter vision exceeds in glory.

Standing up in the midst of the wondering throng, this once fearful but now renewed disciple proclaimed to those who would forbear as well as those who would hear that the Man whom they had crucified with wicked hands was both Lord and Christ, the one whom David had foreseen, the hope of the ancients, the joy of the Church.

The sight of this transfigured disciple proclaiming a crucified but now risen Christ pricked the multitudes to the heart, and so set them to longing for conformity to the same Image that they cried, "Men and brethren, What shall we do? "

In the passage before us the writer exhorts us to flee from those things which were the cause of our undoing, with each clause sinking deeper into the cause of our perverseness; then suddenly turning away from this vision of man's uncleanness, he catches, in the next verse, the full vision of God's holiness, and man's possibilities in attaining to that holiness.

But what a vision of man's wretchedness, of my wickedness, is comprised in these words! No matter how disagreeable the task, let us look, for a few moments, into the hole of the pit from whence we were digged, and then thank God for a Deliverer.

Ignorance. How little the natural man knows of God! He can behold the glorious sun shining down from the heights of heaven, and never catch a glimpse of the divine majesty that placed it there. Neither forests or waving fields, gentle breezes or refreshing rains, summer's gladness or winter's snows, plenty or famine, preach any sermons to his darkened mind. Divine providences, gentle or severe, are of little worth to him. He can tell the nature and properties of plants and minerals, knows the haunts and attributes of wild animals, can reason wisely of the forces of nature and their inherent powers, but cannot see the God whose handiwork these things are.

These "natural" men can see the beauties of Shakespeare and Milton; analyze with learned niceness the works of Dickens or Kipling; they can digest volumes of mathematics, science, of literature, but can see nothing in the Word of God, the Book of books.

Oh, brethren, let us teach men to love the Word of God. Let us throw aside our wise sayings, let us stop trying to modernize the sacred desk, and let us make this our one aim, to enlighten men's minds concerning the mightiest theme of eternity, and save their souls. I know some will not listen to the voice of those who would charm them with the old, old story, but if we do our duty their blood is off our skirts.

Corrupt Affections. Not only are men's minds perverse, but their affections are evil. It seems as though one glance at the great mass of humanity would convince any right minded an of this fact. Why do men love pleasures more than God? Why must appeals be made to men's appetites or love of fun to eke out a miserable pittance for the work of God? Why are the circus, the theater, the parks and movies over-full and the house of God lying waste? If men's affections are not perverse why will they compass sea and land, undergo any hardships or self-denials to obtain riches, and why will they spend these riches so lavishly for their own pleasure or profit, and give to the cause of God with grudging hand, or not give at all?

See that fine looking, well-kept young man entering yonder grog shop. He stays but a short time until he comes out reeling, simpering, falling in his own vomit. Shameful degradation has taken possession of his glory. Why does he delight in the thing that thus causes his downfall?

If one could but go with the Christian missionary into the depths of Africa, of India, of China, or even of London or New York, and behold the wretchedness and debauchery, the uncleanness and crime, he would carry away a vivid remembrance of the depths to which "the former lusts" would carry a man unhindered by the preventing grace of God, or the restraining power of law or society.

Perverted Will. If the unregenerate man is left free to "fashion himself," his ruin is accomplished. Led on by the perversion of his own heart and the ignorance of his mind his will is forced to go wrong.

This is where parents so often make a sad mistake, and, oh, how often they say, "I see it now, but it is too late." Children of tender years are left to choose their own amusements and companions. Vile thoughts are thrust into their minds by evil associates and the downward journey is begun. In due time they turn away from the church, they forsake the family altar, they do not kneel at their bedsides, they forget the Bible. Their wills, uncontrolled by proper parental government, are fashioning them. Finally, willful, headstrong, perverse, with the bits in their teeth, they repudiate their parents' religion, they refuse to obey, and declare they can and will take care of themselves. Out into the dark they go, away from God, from home, from heaven, to stumble on the dark mountains of sin, to fall and rise no more. A deceived heart, encouraged by a perverted will and vile affections, has turned them aside.

Is this your son or daughter? Are the reins held with loving firmness that the will of that child may be taught to fashion itself after God's pattern?

But now we come to the end of this ugly picture. Thank God for grace that can change all this. And from disobedient and gainsaying men refashion us into obedient, humble children. A'Kempis prays, "Set me free from evil passions, and heal my heart from all inordinate affections: that being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made fit to love, courageous to suffer, steady to persevere."

Obedience. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." Obedience, divinely inspired, is not a spiritless, slavish abnegation of self, so forcibly illustrated in Roman Catholic monasticism, but a sprightly, joyous purpose to do God's will, knowing that the following of that will is to one's own best good and eternal gain, as well as the greatest glory to God, our greatest benefactor.

Obedience is a self-forgetful grace. Self-abasement, in the Spirit, places the soul in line with the requirements of God and on the plane of our highest good. The vainglorious vaunting of self, so common with the world, is inconsistent with godliness and is another proof of the utter blindness of the unregenerate heart; but that elimination of self, called in Christian phraseology "humility," is a grace of the highest worth and greatest benefit, but is seldom seen.

If twelve legions of angels stood ready to obey the Man of Calvary, even to the extent of delivering Him from His tormentors, why should I, a humble man, a worm of the dust, consider it beneath my dignity to run quickly at His word to do the most menial service or the hardest tasks

The spirit of obedience settles all questions that may arise concerning duty. This form of obedience is not slavery, it is the joyous bound of childhood conquered by love.

But you say, "If this is true, where is the cross?" To which we would answer, Are not heavy burdens carried gladly for the one you love?

They are heavy, to be sure, they weary the shoulders, they may cause the tears to flow, but would you for all this throw them down? Would you say, "Wife, I am sorry indeed that I am forced to bear such burdens for you and the little ones?"

Not if there is any manhood left in you. You look over the feelings of pain, and truthfully say, "I bear my burdens gladly for the ones I love." Likewise the heart of the Christian says:

"The old rugged cross, how I love it
Its burdens, reproaches and shame;
And naught else on earth do I covet
But to bear it in Jesus' name."

An obedience that cannot bear the test of disappointments, of burdens, of heartaches or of crosses is not genuine obedience. A child that runs with as great zeal to do the unpleasant things as the pleasant is an obedient child. A Christian who has learned to obey in trial the same as in joy is made of martyr stuff. He is patient in tribulation and in everything gives thanks.

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12 -- CALLED UNTO HOLINESS (a)

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."- I Peter 1:15.

Peter and his brother Andrew were down at the Sea of Galilee fishing. Jesus, just returned from His wilderness temptation, passing by, saw them, and said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." They did not question for a moment, they did not even ask the privilege of burying their father, or taking the nets, but, "leaving all," they followed Him.

The Lord had been crucified and the disciples were broken-hearted. Seven of them were together and Peter said., "I go a-fishing." They all replied that they, too, would go. After toiling all night with no success, at the command of Jesus, who appeared to them, unrecognized, they cast their nets on the right side of the ship and enclosed a great multitude of fishes. Then followed the conversation between Jesus and Peter in which the Lord commanded Peter to feed His sheep.

Thus for the first and for the last time was our fisherman disciple called. How he appreciated the call is only revealed by his after life and the manner in which he glorified God in his death.

My brethren, what a glorious calling is ours! Out from the things of time, the things that perplex and annoy; out from the sins of the world, the sins that eat as a canker at the vitals of man's immortality; out from the pleasures of the world, pleasures that glitter as a bubble, and burst, and are gone; out from the sorrows of earth, sorrows that depress and drive the soul to despondency; out from the enjoyment or endurance of Egyptian fleshpots, prodigal swine-pens, from roaring furnaces, and lions' dens, into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. Thank God for the marvelous change.

Men are "called" to various earthly positions and occupations, but this calling is "unto holiness." That calling is earthly, this calling is heavenly. That calling is transient, this calling is eternal.

Notice who it is that calls. "I the Lord have spoken and have called the earth from the rising of the sun till the going down of the same." Patiently, tenderly, persistently, this heavenly Herald calls. His voice is heard from Eden to Patmos, from creation to judgment.

What pathos in His voice as in the cool of the evening He called our fallen parents, and how the guilty pair feared to meet their divine Benefactor! He called the antediluvian world by the preaching of Noah; He called Abram to leave his kindred and gods and to go to a country of promise; He called Israel out of the iron furnace, Egypt, and led them gently for forty years through the wilderness of trial; He called His disciples from their nets and from their tax-gathering and made them savers of souls; He calls you and me from the things of time and makes us kings and priests unto God with the promise that we shall reign on the earth.

God calls in every way possible to win a soul. His gentle as well as His severe providences remind us of our duty to Him. Day and night, year in and year out, He is knocking, calling, wooing, at my heart's door. He never wearies nor ceases to call. While there is any hope He continues to plead.

I catch a vision of a kind, patient form standing in the door of the little cottage around which fond memory clusters so many joyous days. I hear her call and now I would gladly hasten to respond. But we folded those cold hands in death, we tenderly closed those once tear-stained eyes, and wrapped that beloved form in a beautiful white robe, emblem of purity you know the rest.

Turning tearfully from this scene (how strange that we linger at the house of grief!) I behold another and a more glorious vision. The gates of heaven are open wide, and in its portals is the face of One that is more marred than any seen. His hands, His feet, and His side are pierced, on His brow are marks of a thorn crown, and across His back ugly scars from the cruel scourge. He is calling; hear Him, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

O my soul, why so cold? Know ye not that yonder Form is the Christ of God? Do you not know that the almighty heart is filled with glowing love for thee? Know you not that His rest which He shall give is glorious? O God, soften, melt, tender my heart, remove every vestige of stoniness, and let me melt like wax in the furnace of Thy fullness, of love.

I note the character of Him who calls. He is holy. I stand in awe before the task of describing to any degree the holiness of God. Such a task is too great for mortal man.

Could I receive from the hand of God a spark of the celestial Mind and with this as a guide go forever downward into the unfathomable chasms of the damned, both of men and of angels, then I could behold God's holiness as it is revealed in His hatred for sin. Could I, guided by the same wisdom, mount forever the pinnacles of heaven's effulgent glories and search unwearied the depths, the height, the length, the breadth of the divine Being whose nature is holy, then I could find some of God's holiness in its glorious and essential being.

This majestic, this awful God has called me, why should I delay? Mending nets and gathering taxes are legitimate pursuits, but when God beckons me away, why should I linger? If God calls me He means to make of me something this world could not make. God knows me and sees in my being possibilities man could never see. He may exercise these talents by putting me to feeding sheep on the "back side of the desert," or breaking up the fallow ground and smashing the clods in some secluded spot in His great field, or He may set me to gleaning with sadness behind the reapers who shout as they garner in the sheaves. If I am true, will He not reward me at the last? If the reward is not the greatest, the consciousness of having done my duty is a great reward.

When Philip of Macedon, heard of the beauty of Athens he said, "I must have this town either through gold or through the sword." How strange that mortal man should neglect all the glories and riches of heaven to which he is called and choose instead the perishing glory of time! George Nitsch says, " Oh! that we only had a bunch of grapes out of the land of Canaan, and were able to dip the point of our staff in heaven's flowing honey! We would then lose our desire for the sour drinks of this present life, and despise them, as the children of Israel did the manna in the wilderness."

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13 -- CALLED UNTO HOLINESS (b)

"But as he which has 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 1:15, 16.

From his childhood Peter had followed the occupation of a fisherman. His nets brought up "both good and bad," and he had become accustomed to sorting out and rejecting the bad and carefully preserving the good. After all, it is an enviable accomplishment to be able to draw the fine shades of demarcation between the good and the near-good. Many an otherwise good workman has failed because of a weakness here. The failures are they who build on a good foundation but erect their superstructure of wood, hay and stubble. These the fires of trial will destroy. On the other hand, the successes are they who build of gold, silver and precious stones, materials which the tests only cause to shine more brilliantly. No genuine gold need fear the test that reveals its character.

How a fisherman delights in calling attention to the fine qualities of his catch! In casting his nets into the deep seas of God's Word and of personal spiritual revelation Peter had brought up

many peculiar treasures, but none greater than those mentioned in the verses under consideration: God is holy; & holy God has called; since God is holy, we can be holy; since God is holy, we must be holy; and, this holiness should manifest itself in each word, thought and action of our lives.

God is holy. Benjamin Whichcote says, "If a man has wrong suppositions in his mind concerning God, he will be wrong through all the parts of his religion." Holiness is the antithesis of sin. Because of His holiness God is inexorably and eternally opposed to sin. No man can be approved of God while he willfully harbors evil in his heart or life. If men will get it into their minds that God is holy, and will obtain a proper realization of what holiness is and how it is opposed to sin, they must inevitably see the impossibility of serving God and the devil.

The awful holiness of God so places Him in opposition to sin that He will eventually sweep the universe with the bosom of His wrath, make everything outside of hell immaculately clean, and confine sin forever within the adamant walls of perdition. Some people say that any place outside of heaven will be hell. How strange that they cannot see that this would be surrendering all but the definite place called heaven to the devil! No, the fact is that everything outside of hell will be heaven or will be so cleansed from pollution, or the possibility of pollution, that nothing will remain to hurt or destroy.

The holy God has called. Although God is holy, and, as a consequence, is unalterably opposed to sin, yet in His infinite wisdom and grace He found a way to save unholy men. Forth from the realms of light, down into this dark, sinful world, He sent His only begotten Son to carry the glad news of an open fountain into which sinners might plunge and be clean. At the heart's doors of rebellious men this heavenly Messenger stands knocking, calling, pleading. Though oft rejected and insulted He does not leave, but calls all the more tenderly.

O my soul, know thy worth and thy day of salvation. Behold thy Redeemer, thy Friend; forsake thy earth-born pleasures and flee to this Friend of sinners, recline upon His bosom and drink in of the sweetness and fragrance of His gracious Spirit. Samuel Rutherford says, "Think ye it a small honor to stand before the throne of God and the Lamb, and to be clothed in white, and to be called to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and to be led to the Fountain of living waters, and to come to the Well-head, even God Himself, and to get your fill of the clear, cold, sweet, refreshing Water of life, the King's own well, and to put up your own sinful hand to the Tree of Life, and take down and eat the sweetest apple in all God's heavenly paradise, Jesus Christ, your Life and your Lord? Up your heart! shout for joy! your King is coming to fetch you to His Father's house."

Since God is holy, we can be holy. God is not a tyrant to command His creatures to perform impossibilities. He is not a weakling, lacking power to assist the struggling honest soul. Neither is He miserly, withholding grace and strength that men so much need. He is able to deliver and to preserve the godly. He does not give His Spirit by measure, but abundantly, and when He gives His Spirit, He gives of His own nature which is holy. There is no need in the human family, no matter how great, that God will not supply. Every possibility in the atonement of Christ is at the disposal of him who will turn from sin and join the ranks of the willing and obedient.

How much more we would prosper if we would stop measuring God's ability by our own weakness, and acknowledge that in Jesus Christ all fullness of grace and deliverance dwells, and that this fullness is manifested for our temporal and eternal felicity.

Since God is holy we must be holy. How any man who reads the Bible, and claims to believe what he reads, can escape this conclusion is a standing mystery. God commands nothing that is unessential to our salvation; and when He says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," He knows that holiness is an absolute essential to our well-being.

Of course any of us can refuse to be made holy, but when spiritual well-being is at stake holiness is a necessity. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," He did not mean to teach that Nicodemus was forced to be converted, but that if he desired to enter the kingdom of heaven, he must be born again. The new birth was an essential qualification to his eternal happiness. And just as truly is holiness of heart and life an essential qualification that we may enter heaven.

This holiness should manifest itself in each word, thought and action of our lives. God begins His work of purification in the heart, and when the heart is made right the words, thoughts and actions will be right, for do men gather thorn-apples from grapevines or thistles from fig trees? Or does a sweet fountain send forth bitter water?

What a glorious privilege is here! The mighty God, the infinitely happy Deity imparting, along with His purity, His own joy to His needy creatures! Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Surely this is "fullness of joy."

Isaac Pennington says, "There is in God a fullness of blessedness and perfection, which He will not always lock up in His own bosom, but will find a time to let down upon His seed, and upon His creatures ' that they also may taste of, and fill themselves with the sweetness and fatness of His life and Spirit."

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14 -- THE COMING JUDGMENT

"And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of person judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. -- I Peter 1:17.

Andrew Jukes says, "Only on dark cloudy days can the bow of heaven be seen spanning the lower earth. Then, mid dark waters, when the sun breaks out, though the cloud may be dark, a bow appears amid the darkness; half a ring-half that ring with which the regenerate soul is now married to the Lord. The lower world yet hides the rest of the ring; but on high 'a rainbow' shall be seen 'in a circle round the throne.' "

Along with other men, our fisherman disciple had his seasons of passing through dark waters, but he learned that this life is only a sojourn, and that he was living in the midst of

strangers who were hostile to his profession and who would exert every power to cause him to make shipwreck of grace and thus displease God, hence the need of fear.

He had seen his Master command the winds and calm the raging sea; he had seen the demoniac sit clothed at the feet of Christ, and the multitude go backwards and fall to the earth before the calm gaze of the Son of man; but now he catches a glimpse of the great white throne and Him that sits thereon, before whose face the earth and the heavens flee away and in view of the majesty and awfulness of that hour, he counsels us to pass the time of our earthly life in fear.

This life is a sojourn. A sojourner is a temporary resident, one who will stay but a short time and then be gone. The Christian realizes that here he has no continuing city, but he seeks one to come, a city which is out of sight, whose builder and maker is God. The worldly man's hopes and aims are too degrading and transitory to be worthy the quest of an immortal soul. " He builds too low who builds beneath the skies."

This life is but a rehearsal where men prepare themselves for the great realities of eternity; it is only a school in which they learn lessons and fit themselves for the eternal sphere of action in the other world. How many persons have trifled away their school days and afterwards spent their lives in regretting their lack of fitness to meet the great problems with which they were confronted! In like manner, there are many who trifle away their earth-lives in dreams of sin, and they finally awake, when it is too late, to the fact of a misspent life and consequent lack of preparation for the great problems of eternity. Eternal derelicts! Drifting out into the night of regrets and the hell of lost hopes, without rudder or anchor, to be dashed forever in their helplessness against the fiery rocks of perdition! Eternally weeping out their remorse over a ruined life! But their tears will never fall in mercy's sight.

Oh, my friend! for Jesus' sake, for your own soul's sake, cease your trifling, gird up the loins of your mind, call upon God, and pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

Our surroundings are not conducive to growth or even continuance in grace. Isaac Watts understood. this point when he wrote:

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease,
While others fought to win. the prize
And sailed through bloody seas?"

"Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?"

It seems to be the continual study of worldly men to invent new methods of alluring from the paths of righteousness those who otherwise would be pious. Theaters, movies, amusement parks, new and vulgar dances, ungodly secret societies and clubs, fashionable and immodest

dressing, moneymaking schemes, "and such like," spring up on every side in an ever-increasing multitude, until they have become as much a pest as the frogs of Egypt, and their name is legion.

Besides these things which allure are others which are opposed to the grace of God. False doctrines, higher criticism, infidelity, formality, occult science, shallow evangelism, a time-serving ministry, unreasonable and wicked men who persecute the way, and many other notions and isms, are bitterly arrayed against the gospel and those who profess a personal interest in its blessings.

There is great need of carefulness on the part of the Christian that he may properly meet the besetments of the way. When our first parents came from the hands of God, in their innocence, they knew nothing of sin, but when evil came into the world it became necessary that we should know enough of sin to avoid it, enough of ourselves to properly practice self-control, and enough of God's will to follow it.

It is a mistake to say that all we need to preach is the positive side of religion. On the contrary, enough must be said of negatives to warn people that the end of the ways of sin is death. Many a person has made shipwreck of faith because he had not been taught certain things were sinful and that indulgence in evil would forfeit the favor of God. Either all negative or all positive produces an overbalanced religion, while the religion of the Bible is well balanced, composed of hatred for sin and love for God and our neighbors.

Besides being beset by foes without, there are certain appetites and desires which are perfectly natural and legitimate, but concerning which self denial must be practiced or they will monopolize our attention and thus cause our overthrow. Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Then, the honest heart is careful to know the will of God and when it is known, to perform it. There is too much haphazard religion, too much blindness and too little studying the will of God. Search the Scriptures, for they testify of Jesus Christ and reveal the path of duty.

The heart must be filled with a filial fear of God and an earnest desire to do His will. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

All this carefulness should be exercised in view of the fact that we must all stand before the awful judgment seat. The passage before us states three facts concerning the judgment:

We will be judged by the Father. That awful being, before whose blazing throne angels and archangels, principalities and powers, bow in abject humility, will summon us before His tribunal, and while His omniscient gaze penetrates to the deepest recesses of our hearts, will pass our sentence which we must acknowledge to be just.

He will judge us according to our works. Not according to our nationality, our family, our color, our condition in life or our church membership, but according to our works. No man can blame the judge for his condemnation, but in addition to the sentence of the judge the sinner's own conscience will declare its justice; on the other hand, the reward of the righteous will be all the

greater because it is based on moral worth as manifested in the whole course, of their ransomed and Spirit guided lives.

The Father will pass judgment without respect of persons. The money of earth's millionaires will be utterly worthless, the greatness of kings and lords will be contemned, the learning of the wise will be counted as foolishness, and all these will stand on equal footing with the poorest, the most unlearned and the meanest of earth, for God accepts no man's person.

O God, since these things are true, may I pass the time of my earthly sojourn in fear; may I pray without ceasing that when my Lord may come I may meet Him with gladness and enter into His joy.

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15 -- REDEMPTION

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." -- I Peter 1:18

Every good Jew held the traditions of the fathers in great respect. Very often they placed greater stress on such things than they did on the written word. Jesus even accused them of making void the law by their traditions.

Peter had heard Jesus rebuke the Jews for their extreme notions concerning the Sabbath, had heard His defense when the Pharisee had rebuked Him for eating with unwashed hands, and had heard the scathing rebuke so justly administered to those who tithed mint, anise and cumin, but neglected the weightier matters of the law; but for some reason his Jewish prejudices still clung to him, until he so dissembled that Paul felt called upon to administer a stinging rebuke. It is to be hoped that this was the last time he was guilty of such an offense, and we have strong reasons to believe that it was, for in this verse he speaks of being delivered from the vain conversation received by tradition.

"Forasmuch." Seeing or considering that they knew how they were redeemed from their vain conversation, another reason is added why they should pass the time of their sojourning here in fear. From their present experience of the truth of God they are convinced of the further truth that God shall judge the world in righteousness.

"Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things." This verse presents the negative side of redemption from two angles; for in addition to stating what redemption saves us from, it states some things that do not redeem the soul.

"Our English word redemption," says Dr. Gill, is from the Latin, and signifies buying again; and several words in the Greek language of the New Testament are used in the affair of our redemption which signify the obtaining of something by paying a proper price for it." H. B. Smith, in Christian Theology, says, "Redemption implies the complete deliverance from the penalty, power and all the consequences of sin: Atonement is used in the sense of the sacrificial work,

whereby the redemption from the condemning power of the law was insured." Atonement is the price paid for all men whether they are ever converted or not; while redemption is actual deliverance from the power and penalty of sin through that atonement.

Redemption implies a finished operation which in grace only comes from personal contact with the Redeemer. Since sin and guilt are actualities, the remedy must be actual. Like disease of the body, sin is a disease of the soul, and as bodily disease requires the immediate application of a specific remedy, in like manner soul disease requires the immediate application of God's remedy.

As sin is the monster which has led humanity captive, it is perfectly natural to conclude that, if a soul is delivered from its awful thralldom, that soul will know the work is done and it is also natural to suppose that along with the consciousness of deliverance will come the knowledge of the source from which the deliverance proceeds. Would the Almighty God finish as infinite a work as the redemption of a soul and leave that soul in ignorance of the fact that the work accomplished is God's work? I think not.

There is no power in corruptible things to redeem a soul. "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God.' Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgressions, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? "

Earthly riches of any kind are contemptible when weighed in the balance against the worth of an immortal soul. Though one could possess the riches of the whole world, with all the pleasure, honor and pomp that such great riches could purchase, and though he were so constituted that he could enjoy all these things to their utmost, yet he must die, and, if his soul is lost, of what value are all his riches? If riches are of so little value to give enduring happiness, of what value would they be to redeem the soul?

Men's souls are immortal, and since they are immortal there is no material thing that possesses enough value to redeem them. An immortal soul must be redeemed by an immortal sacrifice. Life must be given for life.

"Vain conversation." "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Yea all our works are sin and death till God breathes upon us his quickening Spirit. The wise man sought after mirth, and pleasure, "this also was vanity;" he gave himself to wine and folly; Made great works, builded houses, and planted orchards and vineyards; he got servants and maidens, and had great possessions of cattle; he gathered silver and gold and men and women singers and musical instruments; but when he looked on all his works he declared that "all was vanity and vexation of spirit."

Yet vain men are prone to follow the vain traditions of those who have gone before. Sin does not become any less sinful because its traditions are inherited. I once knew a family of young men who excused their neglect of God on the ground that their ancestors were sinful. Their father, grandfather and great-grandfather were infidels. Did this excuse them? By no means. "What mean ye that ye use this proverb ... The fathers have eaten sour grapes and their children's teeth are set

on edge?... Behold all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

If a man cannot trust in his inheritance as a valid excuse for his sins, neither can he trust in his possessions or even in his own moral worth as a purchase price for his redemption. Very often God strips a man of all he has and even allows him to sink deep in the scale of immorality that he may learn his own weakness and insufficiency and lean alone on God.

Jeremy Drexelius says: "There is a time when wounds cause health and temporary loss is gain; and there are many occasions when we are overcome for our own good. God sent Jacob away with his thigh out of joint that he might learn, and we, through him, not to trust in ourselves or our own strength, nor yet in that of others, but to rely on the power and goodness of God alone. But because the sound man trusts in his health, the strong in his strength, the learned in his learning, the rich in his gold, the wise in his wisdom, and because the poor man hopes to be supported by the rich, and the weak by the powerful, therefore God, in the perfection of His wisdom, frequently removes all these, that, when the props on which we used to rest are gone, we may learn to rest on God alone."

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16 -- THE PRECIOUS BLOOD (a)

"But (ye are redeemed) with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." -- I Peter 1:19.

Many traditions, precious to the heart of the Jews, clustered around the temple at Jerusalem. Here the sacred fires were always burning; here, for many generations, their ancestors had worshiped, and upon its altars the sacrifices were continually offered. Every year they congregated from far and near to commemorate the exodus from Egypt and to eat the paschal lamb.

There is no doubt that from his earliest recollection Peter had journeyed with his parents and acquaintances to the holy city and had listened with wrapt attention to the old, but ever new, story of the deliverance from Egypt, and of the paschal lamb whose blood, sprinkled on the posts and lintels of the doors, had protected his ancestors from the destroying angel.

And now he sees another Lamb, a Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; he sees this Lamb in the garden of Gethsemane in such agony of soul that His sweat is mingled with blood; he sees Him in the judgment hall, His back lacerated by the Roman scourge, and His brow pierced with the crown of thorns; again he sees Him on the cross bleeding from the cruel nail wounds in His feet and hands and the spear thrust in His side, until the last drop of His blood is spilled upon the earth, an atonement for the sins of the whole world.

No wonder the apostle calls this blood precious. No draught from any fabled fountain of youth could ever bestow such buoyancy and life; no nectar of the gods could impart such abundant immortality; no ambrosial ointment could give such fragrance and incorruption. But why should we compare the "precious blood of Christ" with such childish fancies? Why? Because nature, all

creation and the flight of human fancy all combined can never produce a figure that will not sink into utter childishness by the side of so great a wonder,

"O sacred Head, now wounded,
With grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
With thorns, Thine only crown:
O sacred Head, what glory,
What bliss, till now was Thine!
Yet, tho' despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine."

The Lamb of God was the embodiment of nobility, of purity, of innocence and of perfection. No created being could ever approach unto His infinite glory. He is the Lily of the Valley, He is the Rose of Sharon. In Him can be found no blemish; as a sacrifice He is perfect. In Him can be found no spot; as a substitute He is all that infinite justice demands.

O sin-mad world; O world-enamored church; my own slow, short-sighted heart! why art thou so little taken up with the most beautiful Flower that ever the Paradise of God produced? No wonder, when his ecstatic soul caught a fresh vision of Christ, that Rutherford exclaimed: "Christ is a well of life; but who knoweth how deep it is to the bottom? This soul of ours hath love, and cannot but love some fair one: and, oh, what a fair one, what an only one, what an excellent, lovely, ravishing one, is Jesus! Put the beauty of ten thousand worlds of paradises like the garden of Eden, in one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colors, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one: oh what a fair and excellent thing that would be? and yet it would be less to that fair and dearest, well-beloved Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains of ten thousand earths. Oh, but Christ is heaven's wonder, and earth's wonder!

"The precious blood of Christ." The blood is the life. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins. Death annihilates the powers that produce life. When God breathed into man the breath of life and man became a living soul, He breathed into him divine life and virtue. Divine efficacy and grace are the life of the soul, without these the soul dies. The blood of Jesus Christ is the manifestation, to sin-blinded, materialistic man, of the fact of the presence of grace to approach the sinner and of efficacy to cleanse, and when this blood flows through the soul, divine life and virtue again spring up, and the dead man again becomes a living soul.

The blood of Jesus Christ is a necessity to the liberation of captives. Civilized nations have a custom of exchanging prisoners of war on the principle of reciprocity, giving equal for equal. Sinners are blood-guilty. While they have never literally driven a nail into the hands of Jesus Christ, yet they have sold out to sin and hell, and by acts of rebellion have forfeited the freedom which belongs to the children of God, sold themselves to sin for naught. From this captivity they must be bought by a gift as great or greater than they. The same blood which they have forfeited by their mad plunge into captivity is a necessity in order that the bolts of their prison house may be thrown back and they may walk forth in the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. Whom the Son, the Blood-Giver, makes free, is free indeed.

The blood of Jesus Christ is a necessity in order that men may be resurrected from the death of sin. By a lack of faith in their Creator (and He was the Word) men went away from God and died the death of sin; by the same route, reversed, they must return to God, that is by faith. If unbelief brought sinful death, if the departure of an offended Trinity left men dead in trespasses and in sins, on the contrary, the turning again of His face, the coming, again of God to the believing soul, is life. And the only thing that can turn the face of an offended Deity toward an offending man is the reconciling blood of Christ. And the same blood that washes away the sin-spots and kisses away the death and condemnation of the soul, makes it possible that the graves of the saints shall fly open and that the redeemed shall come forth to the resurrection of life. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming."

The blood of Jesus Christ is a necessity to save men from the curse of the law. The law pronounces the death penalty on all who sin, and, since all have sinned, all are under the curse of the law. A remedy must be found or there is no escape from the consequences of sin. Practically all nations have had a more or less distinct view of the necessity of a vicarious atonement, and, as a consequence, they offer their sacrifices of beasts and human beings. Even Caiaphas admitted that it was fitting that one man should die for the sins of the people.

Marcus Curtius was a legendary Roman hero who lived about the middle of the third century before Christ. The auspices declared that an earthquake chasm in the Forum could be filled only by casting into it that on which the greatness of Rome depended. While everyone was doubting as to the meaning of the declaration, Marcus Curtius presented himself and declared that Rome contained nothing more indispensable to her greatness than a valiant citizen fully accoutered for battle, and offered himself for a victim. Having arrayed himself in complete armor, he mounted his war horse, and galloped into the abyss, which immediately closed and assumed its wonted aspect.

Jesus Christ gave Himself a ransom for man and by being Himself made a curse He saved those who were under the just curse of the law.

The blood of Jesus Christ is a necessity to save us from the power and dominion of the devil. There is a good deal of truth in the old saying that if one can find out what the devil wants the path of duty lies in the opposite direction. It makes no difference to the devil how many things we do. We can have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, we can give all our goods to feed the poor and our bodies to be burned, and yet the devil is pleased if we lack the one thing necessary, the love of God, not divinely given love alone, divine love itself. When it concerns humanity there is no greater, no richer manifestation of divine love than the blood of the Only-Begotten. If we can get hold of this medium of communication between a needy soul and a need-supplying God we are forthwith out of the clutches of our arch-enemy and into the hands of a loving God.

The blood of Jesus Christ is a necessity in order to escape the wrath of God. Not that His wrath must be appeased by the death of His Well Beloved, but the death of Christ is the highest exhibition of the love of God yearning for some consistent plan of salvation. Some plan by which God can escape the moral necessity of punishing the sinner. Divine love and ingenuity found this

plan in the sacrifice of the One, to us, most glorious, THE central figure in the adorable Godhead, Jesus Christ.

"Oh, for such love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break,
And all-harmonious human tongues
The Saviour's praises speak."

* * * * *

17 -- THE PRECIOUS BLOOD (b)

"But (ye are redeemed) with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." -- I Peter 1:19

It was Peter who called attention to the withering of the fig tree which Jesus had cursed. The mind of the fisherman grasped the fact of the curse, for he had been trained in the old law, but it did not catch the other lesson which Jesus desired to teach, -- all things are possible to him that believeth. Both lessons are helpful, the one to that timid soul who trembles in sight of the awful majesty of God, and the other to those bold souls who presume to rush into the presence of God as a horse rushes into battle, but take little heed to their lives and spirit.

A fruitless life, as well as a fruitless tree, is useless and accursed. Justice demanded the death of the barren fig tree, mercy prevailed and it was spared. Justice demands the death of every impenitent sinner, mercy and love prevail and they are spared.

Now mercy and truth meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other, but it will not always be thus. At the judgment justice will prevail and mercy towards the impenitent will be unknown. The results which flow from the lives of every individual will then be gathered up and reward or punishment will be meted out accordingly. Benjamin Pomeroy says, "Human existence is not a chain of so many links, but a network a -- woven web running through the ages and dispensations -- relation intersecting relation, relation crossing relation -- a perfect network; so that, although an individual is taken away by death to another sphere, he is only removed as the fountain. The streams are left, and left flowing. A stream sent out from its fountain, either literal or moral, is only indebted to its fountain for its origin and outlet; the flowing is its own, independent of its fountain. The closing of a fountain may be but a trifle, but who is equal to the streams? Who can say to the distant outlettings, 'Return ye,' and it is done? To prostrate the individual, and hush him still in death, is quickly done, but gather him up! Oh, when can he be gathered up? For he has gone out in word and act, -- in soul emittings -- in moral breath!"

We are now living in the only world in which redemption can be secured. The inexorable laws of justice have been turned aside by the Almighty's gift of an Almighty Sacrifice. Infinite justice could only be satisfied by an infinite sacrifice, infinite mercy could be secured only by the payment of an infinite price, and, thank God! we have both in the Christ who trod the wine-press alone. The devil went to the depth of infernal ingenuity to ruin man, and Jesus Christ went to the length of divine power to redeem him.

The blood of Jesus Christ makes possible a change in the divine attitude towards man, and while it makes possible the redemption of men it also enhances the majesty of the law. To see the almighty Christ suffer because of the sins of the world is a visible proof that the law of God cannot be violated with impunity, and should warn every careless trifler that he should flee sin as he would a venomous reptile.

Christianity without blood is like a cloud without water, or a stove without fire. Such a religion is a promise without power or fulfillment, it is the letter, comely and symmetrical when viewed from without, but lacking the Spirit and possessing no saving efficacy. The "new religion," the religion which has been evolved by modern thought, contemns the idea of blood-redemption as revolting, but such an evolutionary religion as this leaves the soul untouched, and does not change one unholy tendency.

There are four powers possessed by healthy blood, which are directly or indirectly noted in nearly every physiology, and which illustrate the powers of the "most precious blood of Jesus Christ."

1. "The blood is the life." These are the words of the great lawgiver of Israel, who again says, "For it (The blood) is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof ... for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof." No scientist has ever been able to give a satisfactory definition of life, and until they are able to do so they must pardon credulous persons if they are foolish enough to think that Moses got an intimation from God, and gave a real definition, God's own definition. After all, does not every person know that in proportion as our blood escapes in that same proportion our strength decays and death advances?

In like manner the blood of Jesus Christ is the life of the soul, and in proportion as we partake of this blood, in the same proportion we become strong and are filled with the Spirit of grace, for His blood is drink indeed.

2. Blood is purifying. One great office of the blood is to carry away the effete or worn out matter and replace it with new and vigorous material. When the blood ceases to do this the body decays and death swiftly follows. The multitude of redeemed ones who came out of the great tribulations were those who had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Those who walk in the light realize that the "blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses from all sin," and they sing praises "unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

3. Blood is upbuilding. Let the body be wasted and emaciated by fever or any sickness, but if the blood is good the damage is quickly repaired, and in many cases, the last estate is better than the first. Thus, when the blood of Jesus courses through the poor, emaciated human soul, the bones which are broken begin to rejoice, the desert blossoms as the rose, it rejoices even with joy and singing, yea, the righteous flourish as a palm tree, they grow as a cedar in Lebanon, they are fat and flourishing, they still bring forth fruit in old age. This may be a mixed metaphor, but what simple metaphor can anywhere near express the glorious truth? We must turn again to the men of inspiration. The apostle prays that God may "through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make

you perfect in every good work to do His will." Christ gave Himself for the church "that He might sanctify and cleanse it -- (making) it a glorious church holy and without blemish."

4. Blood is strength-giving. Cases are on record of persons, who, through loss of blood, were about to die, when not only life but health and strength were given by the infusion of healthy blood. My strength was almost gone, death had boasted of the near-approaching victory over my soul; despondent and sad, yet hoping against hope I peered through the gathering gloom, when, lo, before my astonished sight a crimson stream appeared. My poor heart bounded with gladness, its door, so long bolted and ivy-covered, flew open, and over my enraptured, astonished soul flowed the warm, strength-giving current; I arose, my ankle bones received new strength, my sadness fled and the power of the Lord pulsated within.

"I awoke, my dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I arose, went forth, and followed Thee."

And now I am enabled to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony. Glory be to God!

There are three things which the Bible declares are accomplished by the blood which we wish to notice. These things in some ways are much alike, but since they technically differ we will separate them, but if you wish to confuse the three, be sure your experience encompasses the three, and the error of the intellect will be forgiven.

1. "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." We were far from God, dead in sins, and aliens to the covenant of grace; God could not approach us, for His coming would mean death. What could be done? Jesus Christ stepped between, He became our Mediator, our Daysman, our Atonement, for that is what the word means. He made it possible that God could approach man and yet that man should live, and He made it possible for man to approach God and be accepted.

2. "Without the shedding of blood is no remission." Some imagine that they can bury their past sins in their religious activities and charitable works; but such an endeavor is like bandaging a cancer and believing it is healed. The core of the ugly thing is still eating into the vitals. The only hope is in complete removal. The only hope for forgiveness for past sins lies, not in righteous works, but in the efficacious blood.

3. "Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood." Man was so irretrievably lost that eternity had but one redemption price; how freely that was given we can never know, or how great was the Gift we can never tell.

"None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed;
Or how dark was the night that the Lord passed through
Ere He found His sheep that was lost."

Those who despised Moses' law died without mercy, but those who tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant wherewith they were sanctified as an unholy thing, are worthy of much sorer punishment. Oh, my friend, let us flee to the blood and hide, and there we will be safe; but if the blood shall testify against us not even eternity can remove the remorse.

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18 -- THE SPOTLESS LAMB

"A lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." -- I Peter 1.19-21.

One day Jesus asked the disciples the opinions of the people as to whom He was. After hearing the various answers, He asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter, always ready with an answer, quickly replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." To which Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

A faith that could look beyond the flesh and behold divinity was worthy of praise; a faith that can pierce the dark veil that hides the supernatural from our eyes, and detect the presence and workings of the Spirit of Christ, is worthy of double honor.

There is no selfishness in the knowledge of Christ. When Peter learned the real character of the Christ he desired to impart his knowledge to others. And in the verses before us he attempts a description that will enable us to locate the Lamb of God. Beginning with the ceremonial representation, -- the sacrificial lamb, -- he proceeds in an ever-ascending scale until he reaches the reason for the manifestation of Christ, -- that our hope and faith might be in God.

Oh, that my soul may have eyes to see the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world! And that, seeing him, I may be enabled to drink in of His nature as I would the cooling waters of a bubbling spring in a parched and desert waste!

Reader, do you desire to see Him? Then allow me, with John the Baptist, to say, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

1. Christ is here described as a spotless, sacrificial Lamb. "A lamb without blemish and without spot." No other kind of a lamb was ceremonially acceptable, and God could do no less than present a spotless sacrifice. Even Pilate must confess "I find no fault in Him." Neither the rabble, the false witnesses, the Pharisees nor the priests could find anything worthy of censure. They did not crucify Him because of His sins, but because of His good works and the fact that He told them the truth.

2. This sacrificial lamb was foreordained of God. "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." The omniscient God foresaw the awful degradation of the human race, and His great heart determined on a remedy. Some say that God could have arbitrarily saved sinners, or that He could have saved them by some other means than the death of His Son; but let them search the entire volume of Holy Writ and they will not find one thing to bear them out in their statement. On the contrary, from beginning to end, in teachings, in prophecies, in types and in but one thing appears as a remedy for ceremonies, sin-a bloody sacrifice.

The great heart of the Almighty saw the only remedy, and even before the transgression determined the course He would pursue, -- He would give His Son, His well-beloved, His only-begotten Son, He would offer Him as a sacrifice, and this sacrifice should be holy and acceptable. Jesus Christ was "slain from the foundation of the world," and Abel could take his lamb and approach God with as great confidence as though he had lived in the days of Peter and Paul.

True, there was more or less of the shadow or type in ancient worship, but when God accepted a soul it was just as acceptable as at any time since. We cannot tell the religious exercises of the ancients, but we do know that if they gained the approval of God, they had His approval the same as we, for God has always abundantly pardoned.

The provision for this acceptance was conceived in the heart of God even before the foundation of the world, and was operative as soon as a soul was found that needed help, and we hear God saying to the guilty pair, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

Oh, wondrous grace! My mighty sins did not separate me from hope, but on the contrary these very sins brought forth from the heart of God that spirit of compassion, foreordained, indeed, before the foundation of the world, but only needed because I have sinned. He knew I would sin, He determined that I might escape my sins. He knew that hell was my just portion, but His mercy conquered justice and I am saved. Thank God for His matchless grace!

3. The sacrificial Lamb was manifested in the gospel age. "But was manifested in these last times for you." The prophets prophesied until John, but John cried, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." John the apostle could say, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory."

Jesus said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also." In Him all fullness dwelt, and in Him was manifested the glory of the Father. This glory, in the fullness of its revelation, was kept back from the ancients, but burst forth in all its splendor on the astonished vision of the waiting disciples.

No wonder the happy company in the upper room acted like drunken men. To them had been revealed that remarkable grace which had been hidden in the heart of God since before the foundation of the world. Such an event and such a revelation could not be commonplace, and its results could not be so trivial as to lightly effect the recipients. As wave after wave of celestial glory streamed through their astonished souls their shouts of joy aroused the populace, who rushed together and said, "These men are full of new wine."

This revelation is not for Peter and his associates alone, but in this place the fisherman disciple, writing to the members of the general church, declares that it is for them, -- and that includes me.

4. Jesus Christ, the sacrificial lamb, is the means by which we believe in God. "Who by Him do believe in God." We sing,

"The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin;
The light of the world is Jesus:
Like sunshine at noonday His glory shone in,
The light of the world is Jesus."

Without Jesus Christ our hearts and minds are too dark to even catch the idea of the infinite God. Men are groping in the awful darkness of sin and superstition, vainly attempting to fathom the great hereafter, but without Christ their minds become more and more dense, and their hope all the more hopeless.

With boundless, fathomless pity the Prince of Peace, seeing our helpless condition, flew to our relief, brushed away the veil that hung between, and gave us a vision of the Infinite; cleared away the fogs from our darkened minds and gave us an understanding; and removed the pall of darkness that enshrouded our hearts, and gave us the ability to believe God to the saving of our souls.

5. The sacrificial lamb was raised from the dead. "That raised Him up from the dead." Paul says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain." If Christ was still among the dead what assurance would we have that He could help us? We might still be hurling at Him the old Jewish taunt, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," and seeing Him impotent, we would refuse to accept Him. But He became the first-fruits of those who slept, He conquered death, He led captivity captive, and since He has done all this we can believe that He is able to help us and that He will give us a glorious resurrection and a blessed immortality.

Then, His resurrection was a necessity to the completion of the plan of redemption. Death as well as the devil must be conquered. The fact is that to be a redeemer He must meet every force that would militate against the salvation of those He came to redeem, and, meeting them, He must conquer, or His redemption would be vain. The last enemy is death, and death must be vanquished. How well He succeeded we can never know, but He met death on its own territory and conquered. He robbed death of its fangs, and the saint exclaims, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? "

6. The sacrificial lamb, being resurrected from the dead, was given glory. In this world He was a man of sorrows; in this world He became obedient; in the future world, as well as at the right hand of God at present, He will be and is glorified. Angels may well look on and wonder, archangels may well hide their faces from the effulgent light of His infinite glory, and the spirits of just men made perfect may well shout in adoration of Him who has washed them in His own blood.

There is no doubt that the heavenly hosts find abundant reasons for mighty rejoicing and tumultuous praises as the Almighty unfolds before their astonished gaze the councils of His will and the glories of His person; but it seems to me that there can be no greater cause for amazement than the sight of the great Being who could tread the winepress alone, and who could, by His own power and by the strength of His own right arm, regenerate and sanctify a poor, lost, degraded, fallen human spirit, and so renew it that it should shine in holiness and righteousness as the stars forever and ever.

O Christ, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, may I laud and magnify Thy holy name!

7. All this work and sacrifice of the Lamb was undergone that our faith and hope might be in God. It is well that our faith and hope are not in the things of the world, for the world passes away and the lusts thereof; but instead we are so securely anchored in God that

"When the storms of life are raging,
And the billows tossing high,"

we have a rock in which we can hide and be secure.

And why should we murmur at the trials and afflictions of the way? How do we know but that the loving Father has appointed these things because He knows that they are a necessity to our eternal salvation, even as winds and waves are a necessity to waft the ocean bark to its desired haven. Some one has said, "What if we should be visited with sickness, threatened with false accusations, perhaps with accidents? Our trust is in God, our dependence upon Him: and who knows but the divine wisdom has made choice of these afflictions as the means to bring us to eternal glory?"

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19 -- OBEDIENCE AND ITS RESULTS

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, and that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." -- I Peter 1:22.

When the day of Pentecost had fully come the Spirit descended on the upper-room company like a rushing, mighty wind, and filled all the place where they were sitting. Every heart was a flame of love. Those mighty joys were too great for such straightened quarters, and, rushing into the streets, they began to tell what great things God had done for them.

When the multitude had gathered together, Peter, the Galilean fisherman, transformed and Spirit-filled, preached one of the greatest sermons that human lips have ever uttered. As a result of this glorious manifestation of power three thousand souls were added to the church.

If we should ask a reason for all this commotion and these signal triumphs, Peter, with his characteristic simplicity, says that it was because God had purified their hearts by faith. An excellent reason, for purity always produces a stir, causing heaven to rejoice and the pillars of hell to tremble.

O God, Thou hast caused us to understand that the power of the Spirit is not to be found in mere scholastic attainments, nor in excellency of speech; on the contrary, Thou canst take the worm that lies submissive in Thy hands and make it a sharp threshing instrument having teeth, and with it Thou canst beat the mountains and make them as the chaff of the summer threshing floor. Yea, Thou canst use base things to confound the mighty, and things which are not Thou canst use to bring to naught the things which are. Since these things are true, wilt Thou, oh, my God, in Thine amazing kindness, deluge our unworthy, but waiting, receptive souls with Thy glorious, sin-consuming, wonder-working presence!

But this power comes only in the line of obedience and faith. Faith accepts the glorious truth that God has wrought for and will work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, while obedience bridges the chasm on man's side and walks in the light of God's requirements; the two are a link, coupling a man and his God, and bringing the man -into such contact with the heavenly powers that excellent results are produced, both in his own life and in the lives of others.

The central thought of the verse before us is obedience and its results.

The object of obedience is the truth. The mere following of ceremonials and ordinances, be they commanded in the most absolute terms, and though the obedience is never so perfect, is not the object of obedience, that object is the truth-to obey the truth is to save the soul. Jesus declares, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Hence in obeying the truth we obey Jesus Christ.

The agent of obedience, or that which makes obedience possible and acceptable to God is the Holy Spirit. We can fulfill all the forms of the commandments of God with the strictness of a Paul who could testify that touching the law he was blameless, and yet be so void of genuine obedience that in the sight of God all our works are but filthy Tags. But when the Holy Spirit indicts our works the very least becomes acceptable and worthy of reward.

The end or aim of obedience we are taught is, twofold. First, the purification of the soul; and, second, the love of the brethren.

The question might be asked, how does obedience purify the soul? In reply we will say: When a person begins to obey God disobedience becomes a thing of the past, and with the passing of disobedience sin is removed, for there can be no sin without the element of disobedience.

Again, when the desire for obedience is brought forth in the soul, of necessity there arises a desire that the soul may be delivered from those principles or things which binder or retard obedience. In such a place the soul will discover that the flesh and the Spirit are at war with each other, and be forced to acknowledge that because of this warfare it cannot do the things that it would. Realizing this condition of affairs, the spirit of obedience cries out for deliverance from opposing principles, and will not be content till its desire is realized.

The spirit of obedience denies fleshly lusts that war against the soul, and will eventually bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

But obedience will simply be monkish mummery if it is not brought forth and carried on by the Spirit of God. All our works must be wrought in us by the indwelling Comforter, that glorious Helper of our infirmities.

That man and his God must work together is acknowledged by all. The old proverbs run, "God helps those who help themselves," and "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." It would surely be absurd for me to sit idly and expect the Lord to do my work, but it is fair to conclude that after I do my best, and am still unable, God will graciously fill out my deficiencies and finish the task.

If God sends me, as He did Jonah, to a Nineveh appointment, and I faithfully preach the preaching that God bids me, I have a right to look for the cooperation of the Spirit, with results following, commensurate with my labors and God's promises. Any results which seem to be short of this show either my lack of labor and faith, or a misconception of the promises of God, for God always does His part.

The second aim of obedience is the love of the brethren. "But he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes... If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? "

"See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." In these words the apostle exhorts his hearers. One characteristic of a Christian is the love of the brethren. We naturally gravitate towards that company with which we are in agreement. The old Jews were at agreement with hell, such characters will receive their reward; but the saint of God finds all his ransomed being at agreement with God and righteousness, and towards God and His saints he will gravitate as inevitably as sparks fly upward.

Somewhere in God's beautiful home kindred spirits will eventually meet, drawn towards that great central attraction as surely as steel filings are drawn to the magnet; there the harmony will 'be complete, there we shall see face to face, and, as ever has been possible before, fervent love will unite every heart.

"Oh, for that holy dawning,
We'll watch and wait and pray,
Till o'er the height the morning light
Will drive the gloom away;
And when that heavenly dawning
Shall flood the earth and sky
We'll bless the Lord for all He gives,

And praise Him by and by."

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20 -- THE NEW BIRTH (a)

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." -- I Peter 1:23.

The old Jews were proud of the fact that they were Abraham's seed, and, as a consequence, heirs of the promise. They had become so used to looking upon themselves as superior beings that when even the Son of God attempted to rebuke them for their sins He was made to pay the penalty for His transgression by the ignoble death of the cross.

There is no doubt that our fisherman disciple, along with others, had imbibed such self-righteous, "I-am-holier-than-thou" sentiments, and it meant much for him to learn that he must place the conditions of sonship on a different footing than that on which he had been taught to believe it rested.

Much more grace did it take when it meant to abandon Abraham as the head of the spiritual family, Abraham the friend of God, Abraham the father of the faithful, and to substitute in his place the despised, rejected, crucified Son of David, the lowly Nazarene.

But, thank God, Peter and the other disciples were ready to make the exchange; they chose Christ, and by so doing, they exalted Abraham. If the Jews had been Abraham's spiritual children indeed, they would have received Christ, for the faith of Abraham was founded in his most illustrious Son, whose day he saw by faith, and rejoiced.

While the Jews were Abraham's children by natural ties) yet, to be his spiritual children, and this means much more than to be his natural children, even they, through whose veins that patriarch's blood coursed, must drink in of the same Spirit which he imbibed, they must partake of the same nature of which he partook.

But, because some of them refused to thus partake, Jesus rightfully accused them of being children of the devil; that is, they drank in of the spirit of the devil which was opposition to and hatred for the Son of man.

To be born again is to partake of another Spirit. Man may, in a certain sense, be said to be born again when his eyes are open and he sees the beauty and begins to love art, nature, mathematics, his fellow man, or when any of the finer sensibilities of his nature are aroused to discern the higher aims and pursuits of life.

But this birth is very limited, indeed, when compared with the "new birth" of which our text treats. Those changes are all consistent with and included within the possibilities of the natural man, while the new birth is within but extends beyond the natural man and encompasses eternity. It drinks of the spiritual fountain, and that fountain is Christ.

The re-birth of the natural man is a discovery of the less degrading elements of a fallen soul (if less degrading they may be called when they do not lead Godward), while the "new birth" of the soul is a discovery and-a reception of God, of the God-life.

The re-birth of the natural man is all included within the capabilities of a fallen, corruptible soul, and leaves the corruption just as vile as ever; but the "new birth" of the soul, while touching the capabilities of the natural (not sinful) man, comes primarily from without; it is the infusion of an incorruptible seed, and that seed is Christ.

The re-birth of the natural man is a remolding or refashioning of the fallen soul, while the "new birth" purifies and elevates the soul, and makes it godlike.

But the passage before us is more especially a contrast between the natural or physical birth and the re-birth of the spirit. Or it may be a contrast between the Jewish notions of sonship and Gods ideas of sonship.

The prevailing Jewish idea of sonship was altogether natural, or of the corruptible, fleshly nature; or at best the reception of the spiritual privileges, by inheritance, which they supposed were theirs by right since they were the children of Abraham.

But in partaking of the flesh of our parents, -- the descendants of Adam, -- we, through them, partake, of the sinful, corruptible nature of Adam; this is true of the Jew as well as of the Gentile. Then the only boast the Jew could truthfully make was in his greater opportunities, for he possessed the true oracles of God.

But in Jesus Christ corruptible seed is exchanged for incorruptible. The Christian no longer traces his ancestry through many generations back to Abraham or to Adam; but through Jesus Christ he is a son of God, not indirectly, but directly, -a real son.

The first birth is by the will of man and of man, but the second birth is by the will of God. The first birth is so completely of corrupt man that the child is nothing but a corrupt man, totally depraved, as the theologians say, possessing in a greater or lesser degree all the infirmities, in kind, of his parents; but the "new birth" is so completely of God that the child is a son of God with the glorious, holy nature of his heavenly parent. He possesses, in a lesser degree, all the spiritual perfections of his heavenly Father.

The second birth is by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. While those who are born of corruptible seed must die, those who are born of the Word of God shall abide forever.

Sorrows untold are an accompaniment. or a necessary result which follows the corruptible birth, but the "new birth" is a birth of joy; ever-increasing, all-consuming joy is the heritage of a child of God.

Lord, I believe that if my soul fully follows Thee, Thou wilt take away my earth-born sorrows and fill me with heaven-sent joy. Such joys are not found in the passing amusements of the worldling, but are as solid and lasting as the everlasting hills, such joys are only given to the bloodwashed. Oh, the bliss of the glorious knowledge! This joy has already begun in my soul, and shall last while eternity endures.

Macarius, the Egyptian (350 A. D.), describes the joys of the ransomed in the following words:

"At one time they find themselves at a royal banquet, filled with joy, and rejoice with gladness not to be expressed; at another time they are as a bride, enjoying divine repose in the sweet communion and fellowship of the bridegroom. At other times they are seemingly like angels without bodies, so exceeding light and easy they feel themselves with the body. At other times they are like men overcome with wine; joying and rejoicing in Spirit, and inebriated with divine and spiritual mysteries... At other times they are so enflamed with love by the Spirit that, were it possible, they would take up and enwrap all mankind in their own bowels, making no distinction between bad and good... At other times they are like a strong man taking on him the royal Armor, engaging his enemies in battle, and overcoming them; thus the spiritual man takes the heavenly Armor of the Spirit and wages war with his enemies and lays them flat at his feet..."

"For when the soul is once arrived to the perfection of the Spirit, and is thoroughly cleansed from all corrupt affections, and united and associated with the Spirit the Comforter, in a fellowship not to be expressed, and so mixed as to become one spirit with it, then it is all light, all eye, all spirit, all joy, all rest, all gladness, all love, all compassion, all goodness and clemency; for as a stone in the midst of the sea is surrounded with water, so they who are thoroughly drenched with the Holy Spirit are made like unto Christ... For being thoroughly purified by the Spirit, how can they outwardly produce evil fruits: but everywhere and at all times the fruits of the Spirit must appear and shine forth in them."

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21 -- THE NEW BIRTH (b)

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." -- I Peter 1:23.

This matter of the new birth is important, and its interest never fades. The grass withers, flowers fade, gold will tarnish, and the glory of man will pass away as the morning cloud, but he who is born of God shall abide forever; his holy joys are as the perennial flower, as the flowing spring, as the glorious sun which goeth forth from its chamber and rejoices as a strong man to run a race.

His joys are as the gentle breezes which so gratefully fan the brow of the way-weary traveler, or as the mighty cyclone which sweeps all before it; they murmur as the babbling brooklet on its path through the meadowlands, or rush as the mountain torrent in its precipitous flight; they

lie placid as the crystal, lily-fringed lake nestled among the hills, or surge as the mighty ocean against the rockbound shore.

O God, may these joys of the ransomed be my stay through all my wilderness journey, and may I bask forever in the home of ceaseless and immortal bliss!

There are a few characteristics of the new birth which distinguish it from every other possible transaction which may enter our lives.

The new birth is extra-physical, it is beyond or above physical laws or methods. We have grown so accustomed to the laws of our physical beings that we seldom exclaim with the Psalmist, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." But the very nature of the new birth makes it so mysterious and unexplainable that skeptics feel free to declare its impossibility.

But those who have experienced it know its nature although they cannot fully describe it, for human language is not sufficient.

Physical laws govern our physical natures, but this new nature, or renewed nature, is governed by laws peculiar to its own realm. Some of these laws are analogous with the laws of nature, but others are so exactly contrary as to bear no resemblance.

Let us take Paul's list of paradoxes to illustrate this point. But how can these contradictory statements be reconciled? You can search your commentaries in vain for any clue to their inside meaning, but I suppose every Bible student knows how commentators will fail just where it seems they are needed most. Perhaps it is because human language fails to express the depths of divine things; with some it is doubtless true that the letter is more esteemed than the spirit. Oh, for that God-given power that will enable us to drink in of the deep things of God!

"As deceivers, and yet true." Unregenerate men are governed by laws which, to them, are easy of comprehension. Under certain circumstances they will do and feel certain things, and under similar circumstances they expect others to do and feel the same. But true Christians are governed by other principles, and when sinners looking on expect their inflexible laws to operate, and they do not, they are surprised, and, because they cannot conceive of any other motives than their own, they consider that the Christian is a deceiver. Hence, although the saint of God is true to the very marrow, yet he unwittingly becomes a deceiver, and men cannot understand him because he is governed by extra-physical, extra-natural laws.

"As unknown, and yet well known." Paul comes to our rescue. "He that is spiritual judgeth (margin, discerneth) all things, yet he himself is judged (margin, discerned) of no man." How can sin-blinded men "know" a man who is governed by spiritual laws, for the things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned? And yet the an of the world does know the Christian, for his motives and actions are simple and artless-easy of comprehension; it is the Spirit which causes such simplicity that is the unknown quantity.

"As dying, and behold we live." This has a partial parallel in the corn which dies to reproduce itself, but the parallel fails to encompass the whole matter. This man dies and lives at

the same time, he does not die to produce another life, but dies and at the same time reproduces his own life. Paul to the rescue again: "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God." "I die daily." In our cleansing we die to sin, but the earth-clinging (not sin-clinging) still lingers with us; even this attachment to earth, to time, must continually die, even though that death is produced by persecutions, by bereavements, by losses, and in proportion as the earth-life dies the super-life, the heavenly life expands and grows, growing up into Christ in all things. Dead and alive, dying and living at the same time -- this is God's, not man's, law.

"As chastened, and not killed." "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." God chastened, but did not destroy, the Jewish nation; He chastens us that we may be partakers of His holiness.

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." One of the necessary characteristics of the new birth is a chastened, sorrowful heart. The child of God remembers the hole of the pit from whence he was digged, but a broken and contrite heart God -will not despise. But, thank God, this sorrow is not like the worldling's sorrow, without hope; this sorrow opens the fountains of eternal joy, and in the midst of manifold temptations we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

"As poor, yet making many rich." Poor in spirit, poor in this world's goods, yet imparting heavenly riches to as many as will listen to our story. Blessed poverty Not monkish asceticism, but godly self-denial, holy self-abasement, perfect reliance upon God; such abandonment of earthly, sinful good (pardon the contradiction) will cause any man to be a blessing, to make many rich.

"As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." God chooses the things which are not to bring to naught the things which are. The way into the riches of the Lord is down. Down, down, until the worldly, the carnal self-life is gone; until you can say,

"I nothing have, I nothing am,
My treasure's in the Bleeding Lamb
Both now and evermore.

Here at the feet of Jesus, with nothing to claim, with no strength to help yourself, with no goodness to plead, with a vision of your absolute nothingness without the Blood, here you possess all things, for you have Christ.

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22 -- THE NEW BIRTH (c)

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever." -- I Peter 1:23.

The new birth is the rebirth of the soul. "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Marvel of marvels that God can take a soul which is dead in trespasses and in sins

and by the infusion of His own nature so re-animate that dead soul that life will spring out of death, and the bones which were broken are made to rejoice! Thank God, there is hope. Though your soul has gone down to the sides of the awful pit, the Eternal One, who inhabiteth eternity, can, if you will now obey the call to repentance, bring you back, cancel the eternal obligation, set aside the just sentence, and restore your hopelessly dead soul, infusing life, eternal life, and that more abundantly.

The first birth is of the physical man and is without our knowledge or consent: the second birth is of the immortal spirit, and comes about with our knowledge and by our consent.

In answer to the question, "Can a person know the time he is born again?" a certain religious paper replied, reasoning from analogy, that since we cannot remember the time of our first birth, of course, we cannot of the second. But analogy, always uncertain, in this case completely fails, for the new birth is accomplished not only within the realm of our knowledge and by our consent, but by our personal invitation and earnest solicitation. That is, we so desire the work to be done that we become a partner with the Almighty in its accomplishment. We are personally interested in the accomplishment of the work, and, as far as our ability goes, we are just as responsible for its consummation as the other party to the agreement.

Now since the work of the new birth is accomplished by the combined efforts of two personalities, the first, the Almighty as the active, operative agent, and the second, the man, as the passive, actively receptive agent, may we ask, How can the work of the new birth be fully accomplished outside of the full consent and knowledge of both agents?

This brings us to the point that the first birth is without our will, but the second birth is by our will. We had nothing to do with our first birth, either in consenting or in ordering, but if ever we are born again we must put our will into the thing, and one of the last decisions the struggling soul makes before light breaks in is, "I will be Thine, O Lord; I will do Thy will; I will be saved."

In such a case God has not only the obedient body and the submissive mind, but He also has the slavery of the unbound will. Such a soul goes to the door and demands that the Lord shall bore his ear, not as a symbol of galling bondage, but of willing, joyous, submissive servitude; the servitude of a will that cannot be bound, but that desires nothing better than to be the bondslave of the all wise, all loving Trinity. Oh, the sweetness of a servitude that carries with it, nay is impelled by the desire to do the will of its Master!

All earth's bonds are galling, and its servitudes are bitter; here alone is liberty, here is the freedom of the glad winged angels and the mighty archangels. "I delight to do Thy will, O God."

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23 -- VANITY OF HUMAN LIFE WHEN SEPARATED FROM GOD

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away." -- I Peter 1:24.

When Peter left all to follow Jesus, the forsaking was just as difficult and the cross just as heavy as though broad acres and shining treasures were left behind. When the mantle of the aged Elijah fell on the youthful Elisha, the young man forsook his earthly prospects along with his plows, "farewelled" his friends and kissed his parents, and left his self-seeking life for service for others, and by so doing P. he inscribed his name in God's hall of fame.

In like manner Peter forsook his nets, bid good-bye to the old haunts so endeared by the association of years, threw over his worldly prospects and followed the lowly, despised Nazarene, but in so doing he wrote his name high among the great men of the earth. Yes, he brought up from the depths his name which would otherwise have gone down in forgetfulness along with thousands of others who have preferred their nets to the service of the Master.

Our humble fisherman proved that all the glory of man is as the flower of the grass, and received in its stead the glory that comes from God, and heard the Master of ocean and earth and sky declare "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona."

This passage reveals the vanity of human life when untouched by divinity:

- I. Because of the shortness of time.
- II. Because of the emptiness of human glory.

I. The shortness of time. Time is but a tiny island in the midst of the vast ocean of eternity. Compared with eternity the longest life is but a breath, a flower, the passing of a shadow.

When the writer was suffering with typhoid fever, a dear friend brought a beautiful chrysanthemum and put it in a vase at his bedside. With nothing else to do the patient lay hour after hour and admired the glory and symmetry of its snowy white petals. But soon with a feeling of sadness he saw it begin to fade. Brown spots appeared on its once wax like petals, decay had begun. Taking the flower in his hand, he quoted the words of Isaiah: "The voice said, Cry, And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever."

Did you ever in your mind's eye watch the younger generation crowding their elders off the stage of action, and then pressing forward themselves to their own inevitable end? Our fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever? Generations, ages, centuries, yea, thousands of years, have been told, and still the sad story of sickness, pain, death and sorrow goes on until the head grows sick and the heart faint.

The old man, tottering on the verge of eternity, declares that the events of his boyhood days are as vivid as though they transpired but yesterday. The memories of the old swimming hole, the beech woods, the hillside pasture, the daisy field, the fishing excursions, the skating pond, the little red schoolhouse, his playmates and youthful sorrows, joys and loves come crowding into his fireside reveries until tears of genuine loneliness chase each other down his furrowed, careworn cheeks.

I sit 'mid the scenes of my childhood,
The scenes which fond memory loves;
I roam by its brooks, in its meadows,
O'er its hillocks, in shadowy groves.

I sit once again by the mill pond,
I watch the gay squirrel at play,
I list to the blithe robin warble
By her nest at the close of the day.

I welcome the voice of my mother,
As she calls from the dear cottage door;
My father, my brothers, my sisters,
The circle is welded once more.

I stroll through the fields now deserted,
Where swift boyhood's feet used to tread;
I start at the clang of the school bell,
For it tolls the sad dirge of the dead,

How little I thought then how transient
The scenes of my childish delights;
It seemed they would last on forever,
But they fled like the stars of the night.

Thus I sit 'mid the scenes of my childhood,
And count o'er the friends of the past;
I cannot but think life is fleeting
Once the die for its earth stake is cast.

I think of the voices that cheered me,
I think of the hearts then so dear,
As memory brings them before me
I welcome the heart easing tear.

And I ask as I count o'er those faces,
So many have crossed o'er the tide,
Shall I meet them again in the home land,
Fore'er on the glory lit side? "

How sad such a view of things would be with no forward look! An old man, trembling a moment before he sinks into the grave, looking into the jaws of the hungry monster, death, helpless, hopeless, joyless, Christless and heavenless;. Oh, the sadness of that soul whose sun is setting amid the clouds of a misspent life, never again to arise throughout the countless ages of eternity.

But, thank God, all lives do not end thus. The forward look of the aged Christian's heart causes his wrinkled face to glow with the dawning light of hope and joyous expectation. His earthly sun goes down with all the splendor and glory of the fairest of days. Goes down, did I say? Yes, it sets as far as this world is concerned, but rises again in most effulgent splendor in that land Which needeth not the light of the sun or of a candle, for the Lord God giveth him light and his sun shall never go down.

II. The emptiness of human glory. The beauty of the flower fades even before the grass withers, in like manner the glory of man often fades before his body decays.

How little it takes to turn the tide of human glory! The crowd which shouts for the hero today will hiss him off the stage tomorrow. The beauty which is so admired today will be as a faded leaf tomorrow. The wealth of today will burst as a bubble and be gone tomorrow. "What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Take a look along the ages and generations of the past. The wicked have reigned in great pomp and have spread themselves as a green bay tree, they have Established themselves as the cedars of Lebanon and have thought they would continue as the everlasting hills; but the Lord blew upon them and they were not, yea, their place shall know them no more forever.

Generations crowd swiftly in the footsteps of generations gone before. The old man dies and is buried, and his son crowds rapidly into his place and this man in turn is jostled off the scene by his children who follow. Oh man, mortal man, born but for one brief day! Why, oh, why should you refuse to open your sin blinded eyes and behold your end? Why should you refuse to see that the end of a life of sin is sorrow eternal? Why should you refuse to see that the end of a life of godly consecration is everlasting joy?

As angry waves beat 'gainst the rock-bound shore,
And foam with rage, and loudly roar:
So terribly doth rushing time speed on,
It passes and for'er Is gone.

Swift as the red winged lightnings fly,
And flash across the angry sky;
More swiftly time doth hurry on its way,
Yet men will laugh instead of pray.

Eager as a war-horse to the fray,
Where hungry waves of carnage play;
Undaunted thus doth time speed in its flight,
'Tis day a while, then endless night.

Fiercer than the cyclone's roaring breath,
Upon whose wings is borne grim death;
More fiercely still doth time speed on its course,
Life now, but soon the shroud and hearse.

Swifter than worlds wheel on their onward march,
Or planets sweep the spangled arch;
So swift, and swifter, doth your earth life speed,
To grasp FOREVER in its greed.

Eternal years wheel towards you in their flight,
Be quick, escape eternal night;
This hour you live and seek for earthly joys,
This next, dread death your hope destroys.

If the sorrow of this world both past, present and to come, could be measured, who could tell the infinite weight of woe, of anguish of heart, of bitter remorse, of heartbreaking grief, the rivers of scalding tears, the floods of crimson gore spilled on countless battle fields, the burden of the mother's heart bereaved of her children. or of the wives who look out of the window for loved ones who will never return; who can estimate the heartaches caused by the demon drink, or who can measure the immeasurable griefs of those who have followed in the wake of the all but infinite funeral trains of earth's fallen? Oh God., where is the end? Is there no hope for the lost sons and daughters of Adam's fallen race? The answer comes, "It is appointed unto man once to die." But thank God for the Christians hope of a glorious resurrection to immortality and eternal life. Who would refuse to choose the eternity of the blest?

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24 -- ENDURING QUALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

"But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this 4 word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." -- I Peter 1:25.

Peter failed, but the word of Christ was fulfilled, Thus the impetuous Peter was taught the fickleness of his own boasted as well as the enduring quality of the strength, word of God.

Riches increase and men set their hearts upon them, but the evil day comes and their wealth vanishes like a shadow. Kingdoms rise and rule with pomp and splendor, but their day of power is the day of their overthrow, for pride cometh before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction, and this is as true of nations as it is of individuals.

But amid all the changing things God's word endures. Skeptics, critics, fanatics and formalists have assaulted it in vain. Like the impregnable rock of Gibraltar it stands; more than this, it is founded on the Rock of Ages, and while that eternal Rock endures the word of God will stand.

The word of God changes not. The same precious passages which cheered the hearts of the ancient fathers, comfort us today amid the trials of our earthly pilgrimage; and the passages which come to us with such sweetness and power will be sufficient to lift up the head of the last man in all this world upon whom the enemy of souls shall attempt his fiendish wiles.

Truth is always the same. If we could find out the underlying principles which throb in the hearts of the mightiest of God's angels, we would know the truths which by the grace of God will make us free.

God's eternity, God's heaven, God's angelic hosts, God's saints, are all moved and animated by this one undying unchanging principle, truth. And Jesus Christ, the earthly revelation of the Godhead declared, "I am the truth."

The enduring word which is mentioned in this passage is that word which the prophets foretold should be preached. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth. peace."

The enduring word is the news of the appearance of Christ. "And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, 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, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

This enduring word is Christ Himself. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."

The man who preaches the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven makes known:

1. The will of God as revealed by the prophets. "The scriptures of the prophets" are a never failing storehouse of good things out of which the wise scribe brings forth things new and old.

2. He makes known the will of God as revealed by the apostles. These ambassadors of heaven were commissioned and sent forth by the Lord to make His will known to the world, and the minister of the new covenant repeats this message in no uncertain manner.

3. The true minister of the gospel makes known 'Christ Himself. The burden of the preaching of Paul was an attempt to reveal Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the herald of the cross, along with John Baptist, cries, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world."

Oh, that the word of God may dwell in my heart richly, that I may be given wisdom to speak a word in season to him that is weary! Oh that God would give the power to proclaim to all the unsearchable riches of Christ, and fill up the measure of God's will concerning our duty, that we may rejoice with Him forever, world without end. Amen.

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THE END