

*“Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps, set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest” (Jer. 31:21)*

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# The Living Way

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*Upholding the Original Christadelphian Faith concerning:  
"the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12)*

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*“I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat up on him had a bow: and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2)*

## Jonathan – The Mighty Warrior

The first time that we encounter Jonathan the son of Saul, is in 1 Samuel chapter 13. There we read that:

“Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel, Whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Beth-el, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin ...” (1 Sam. 13:2).

Here, we find king Saul dividing his army into two camps. He kept two thousand to be with him in Michmash, but only half that amount to be with his son in Gibeah. However as events unfolded, Jonathan proved to be a better warrior than Saul. We continue reading in this chapter:

“And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that were in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. And Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. And all Israel heard say that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines ...” (1 Sam. 13:3-4).

Notice that here, whilst the smiting of the Philistines was by the hand of Jonathan’s men – numerically half that of his father’s – it was Saul that took the credit for what happened: “all Israel heard say *that Saul had smitten* ...”. That simply wasn’t true – Jonathan, not Saul was the victor. In fact, when we carefully examine the record, we find that rather than smiting the Philistines, Saul was actually retreating before them. In verse two, we read that Saul was in a place called “Michmash” with his 2,000 men. But then in verse 5, we read that the Philistines “came up and pitched in Michmash”. And then in verse 16, we read that: “Saul and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash”. So it would appear that Saul was routed, and had to beat a hasty retreat from Michmash, whilst his son Jonathan was successful in his campaign against Israel’s enemies.

During the time of his retreat, we find that an arrangement had been made for Samuel to meet with Saul, but when there was a delay, Saul became impatient, and took it upon himself to offer a burnt offering - which was not in accordance with the Divine principles concerning sacrifice. This was the first reason why Saul was to be rejected by Yahweh:

“Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of Yahweh thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would Yahweh have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. ***But now thy kingdom shall not continue:*** Yahweh hath sought him a man after his own heart, and Yahweh hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which Yahweh commanded thee” (1 Sam. 13:13-14).

Because he did not keep the commandment of Yahweh, Saul would be rejected - as Samuel said to him later: “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

By contrast to his father, Jonathan was valiant in opposing the Philistine army. In 1 Samuel 14, we find that once again he took the initiative to war against the enemy:

“now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come and let us go over to the Philistine’s garrison, that is on the other side. But he told not his father” (1 Sam. 14:1).

Due to particular circumstances which we will not consider here, Jonathan and his armour-bearer again routed the Philistines, and Saul with his army joined in the battle: “... they came to the battle, and behold, every man’s sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture” (1 Sam. 14:20). Then we read that “So Yahweh saved Israel that day: and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven. This time, proper attribution was made to the victor: it was Yahweh, and not Saul.

But Saul in his folly had made a rash commandment:

“Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food” (1 Sam. 14:24).

This adjuration hindered the victory, as the men who fought became “very faint” (vs 31) with hunger, and consequently, the victory was diminished. Jonathan, however, was not present when the command was given, and was unaware of it. He did eat, and unwittingly contravened the command:

“But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth: an his eyes were enlightened” (1 Sam. 14:27).

### ***THE NOURISHMENT OF HONEY***

As a digression, the eating of honey is used elsewhere as metaphor for partaking of the Word of God:

“... the commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes .... The judgments of Yahweh are true and righteous all together. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than the honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa. 19:8-10).

Here is the irony, Saul did not keep the commandment of the Lord, and so lost his “great reward”! But the courage of Jonathan in pursuing the enemy and partaking of the honey in order to gain the strength to do it, would provide him with great reward, and a victory. We also must have our eyes enlightened by the sweetness of God’s Word, that we might have a great reward as well.

## SLAYING GOLIATH

As we have seen, Jonathan was a man of great faith, and a mighty warrior for Israel. But when we come to 1 Samuel 17, we find that the champion of the Philistines – the giant Goliath – defied Israel, and there was no man to oppose him:

“And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man that we might fight together. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid” (1 Sam. 17:10-11).

The question that comes to mind, is What about Jonathan? In his campaign against the Philistines, he demonstrated a fearless faith in the power of his God to save – why didn't he come against Goliath? One suggested reason, is that he was waiting for a deliverer to show himself, and save his people. Jonathan knew that Saul had been rejected, and would be replaced. We already saw this in 1 Samuel 13, but we also read in chapter 15:

“Samuel said unto him, Yahweh hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to *a neighbour of thine*, that is better than thou” (1 Sam. 15:28).

Notice that here, the promise was that the kingdom would be given to a “neighbour” of Saul, and not a son. Also, many years earlier it had been established that the kingdom would come through Judah, whereas Saul and Jonathan were from Benjamin: “... *the sceptre shall not depart from Judah*, nor a lawgiver from between his feet ...” (Gen. 49:10). Putting these things together, we see that Jonathan most probably knew that he was not going to possess the throne over Israel himself. It would be given to a man, a neighbour, who was better than his father.

In the events that transpired regarding Goliath, David appeared on the scene, as a champion for Israel. So he told the giant:

“... Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of Yahweh of armies, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied” (1 Sam. 17:45).

We know how the narrative describes the victory of the shepherd boy over the Philistine's mighty man, with a stone and a sling. But the events that immediately follow are most interesting in our consideration of Jonathan. The victorious David was brought before the king, and they had a conversation. Then we read:

“And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam. 18:1).

Doubtless, the conversation between Saul and David would have included reference to the Philistine's defeat, although the details are not given to us. But it was as a consequence of that conversation, that Jonathan was united in love to the newly emerged

deliverer of Israel. He had evidently found a kindred spirit in David, and so loved him as his own soul.

Interestingly, the expression used in 1 Samuel 18 is picked up again by the Apostle Paul, and applied to the unity that should exist between believers in Christ. He spoke of his care for the brethren:

“that their hearts might be comforted, *being knit together* in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding ...” (Col. 2:2).

This is an illustration of true Scriptural love: not some shallow sentiment, but a shared conviction of spiritual things. This is the kind of love that Jonathan and David had, and it is the basis of love between believers in Christ.

As we intimated earlier, it would appear that Jonathan knew that he would not be king. This is also apparent in the events that happened next: “Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle” (1 Sam. 18:4). By removing his royal garments and giving them to David, Jonathan was making a statement that he knew that it was David who would be king, and not himself. The spirit of this event also lies behind the Apostle’s words in Romans 12: “be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love: in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10).

Saul also knew that David would be king, and saw him as a threat. Hence, he persecuted him, and sought to bring about his destruction. As head and shoulders above the rest of the people (1 Sam. 10:23), Saul should have been the one to defeat the giant Philistine: but instead he exerted his energies in pursuing a man after God’s own heart. This inevitably brought much sorrow upon the two friends: “they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded” (1 Sam. 20:41).

In these events, we again see the true spirit which should exist between men of like precious faith. “a man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (Prov. 18:24). So Jonathan was a source of encouragement to David, more than his own natural brethren, who didn’t even imagine that he would be king over them. Again:

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular ...” (1 Cor. 12:26-27).

Even so, Jonathan shared David’s grief and suffering. Yet he looked to better days ahead. Both men trusted implicitly in the promises of God:

“... And Jonathan Saul’s son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God” (1 Sam. 23:16).

Again, this is the best way that brethren in Christ can help each other: to strengthen their hands in God. We have numerous examples of this in Scripture: we have Moses and Joshua:

“... But charge Joshua and encourage him, **and strengthen him ...**” (Deut. 3:28)

And Paul to Timothy:

“Thou therefore, my son, **be strong** in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:1).

And the general principle is expressed:

“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the Living God. But **exhort one another daily**, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:12-13).

Saul manifested an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the Living God, yet despite this, his son Jonathan was loyal to him to the end. 1 Samuel 31 describes how the Philistines came against Israel once more, and Jonathan, despite knowing what the outcome would be, remained with him, and fought by his side. But this time both Saul and his sons – including Jonathan – were slain and overcome by the Philistines. Here is the tremendous irony: Saul’s purpose was to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. 9:16), yet instead they overcame him. He sought to make David fall at the hand of the Philistines, yet they instead destroyed him.

In this short consideration of Jonathan, we see an example of a mighty warrior, even greater than his father. Yet also a man of immense faith and humility, recognising the purpose of God in David, his beloved friend. These two men were united in the hope of the promises of God, and in the day of resurrection, they will be reunited, and be granted the greatest victory of all: even over sin and death itself.

*Christopher Maddocks*

“...Never mind other people. Wherever their influence is calculated to dishearten and discourage - forbear - endure; mix kindness with resolution; this is God's will. We ought not take notice of everything; we ought not speak of every weakness we see, because the flesh is a weak thing at best. Let things slide, unless there is a breach compromising the authority of Christ, or dishonoring and weakening of the Truth.

Where a man openly disobeys Christ, or corrupts the faith, that would be a thing to take notice of; a thing that we could not countenance, and be guiltless...

There are many derelictions of duty oversights, faults, offences, it may be - that God is pleased to pass by, at our request through Christ; and we have to cultivate a similar disposition toward those who err through weakness. Be kindly and forbearing to everybody but yourself. Judge yourself by the highest standard. Allow no excuse for your own deficiency. Ever afflict your soul and press higher ...”

*Brother Robert Roberts The Ambassador of the Coming Age 1868*

## The Need for a Vision

In speaking of the Acts of the Lord's Apostles, the Spirit records how that Philip was engaged in "preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ" – and that those who heard and believed his sayings "were baptised, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). This illustrates the vital importance of "the things concerning the Kingdom of God" – they are principles that formed half of what the Apostles taught as the Gospel! And in the case of Philip's preaching, they were "things" to be accepted and believed as a prerequisite to Baptism – by implication therefore, they are "things" to be the subject of faith, in order that Forgiveness and Salvation might be received. But those "things" are not simply doctrines to be believed; they are fundamental principles for daily life.

Our Lord Jesus taught that the primary things to be sought after in this life, are those "things" pertaining to the Righteousness of God, and His Coming Kingdom: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness ..." (Mat 6:33). The Kingdom of God then, must feature predominantly in our daily prayers, thoughts and meditations. No matter what evils the day brings – and they may be many – they are but the transient affairs of this life of mortal travail and sorrow. But "the things" of the Kingdom are eternal, and whilst being hidden from the natural eye, they present themselves to those that believe in bold relief – a glorious picture of coming reality. So it is, that with the Apostle Paul, "we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2Cor 4:18).

Maintaining such a vision of the things promised by the Father is a characteristic of all the faithful. In our New Testament reading for today, we consider those outstanding characters enumerated in Hebrews 11:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (verse 13).

These brethren had not yet "received the promises", yet had "seen them", which means they visualized the fulfilment of them in their minds. And having been "persuaded" of them, they "embraced them", which means that they held on to them in love. But more than this, in actually seeing these promises in faith – in seeking their fulfilment "first" above all other things, these saints were taught that they belonged, not to this age of iniquity, but were citizens of a Kingdom yet to come – they confessed themselves to be but "strangers and pilgrims on the earth".

It was their faith in that future age of glory that taught them the need to "come out" from a world of sin, and journey towards "a better country":

"truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb 11:15-16).

Like Abraham of old, they “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (verse 10), that is, New Jerusalem – the City of the Great King.

So it is, that although the promised inheritance is yet future, we must learn to live the standards and principles of that age now in the age of our sojourning, for we belong not to this benighted kingdom of sin, but to the brightness of the age to come, when all nations shall walk according to the standards and dictates of Almighty God: “the night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day ...” (Rom 13:12,13, cp. 1Thes 5:5). In forsaking a world of sin, iniquity and death, a world which is soon to pass away with all its’ lust (1Jno 2:11), we commence a journey through life to a new Kingdom, whose values and ordinances, we must walk in accordance with now, “as in the day”.

### ***THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM***

Hebrews chapter 11 presents Abraham as an example of faithfulness, providing three occasions in his life to illustrate the point. In each of these three, we have an example of spiritual sight, looking with the eye of faith to those things that are hidden to the natural man.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went: (Heb. 11:8).

The account where this is recorded is Genesis chapters 11 and 12. The occasion is well known to us: Abraham is told to forsake his unbelieving family, and commence a journey to an unknown place, where he would be blessed sevenfold. So Abraham (then called Abram) went in faith, following the directions given to him, and “dwelt in the land of Canaan” after he had separated from his nephew, Lot. In the land, Yahweh appeared to Abraham:

“And Yahweh said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever ...” (Gen. 13:14-15).

Abraham was told to lift up his eyes, and look over the land – and he spent the rest of his life wandering through that land, looking at it, and waiting patiently for it to be given to him. But the only portion of land that he ever owned was the cave of Machpelah, purchased by him to bury his dead. Even then, Abraham recognized the incongruity of a Gentile providing the land as a gift, for he trusted that Yahweh, not the Gentiles would give it to him. So, he bought it with his own money, and continued his wait in faith. Like Moses after him, Abraham saw from his vantage point up a mountain, the Promised Land. Unlike Moses however, he continued to walk through it for the rest of his life, with a seeing faith, anticipating that it would be given to him in due course.

There is another point in the Genesis record, which Hebrews 11 brings out. After Abraham and Lot parted company, we are told: “Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom” (Gen. 13:12).

Later on, we find that whilst Lot initially pitched his tent “towards” the iniquitous city, he further moved to live there. And no longer living in a tent as a stranger and sojourner, he had made it his home: he lived in a house (see Genesis 19). Abraham however, in the land of Canaan, lived away from the cities, and dwelt in a tent. Hence Hebrews 11 points out in its second reference to Abraham:

“by faith, he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, ***dwelling in tabernacles*** with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:9-10).

Here is an aspect of Abraham’s faith, which perhaps we do not readily consider: that he dwelt in tents (tabernacles), in the spirit of a stranger in the wilderness - whereas Lot set up his home in the city, in a house. Though the Scriptures calls him “Just Lot” and a “righteous man” (2 Pet 2:7), with his “righteous soul” being vexed daily at the sinfulness of those around him; his choice to live in Sodom was not wise. We can see this when we compare the example of Abraham – a sojourner living away from the distractions of city life, a wandering nomad, waiting for Yahweh’s promise to be fulfilled.

In our own circumstance, away from the hot climate of the Middle East, it would not be practical to live in tents: we need ‘permanent’ housing to last us as many years as we live, or till the Lord come. But we can try to life out the spirit of Abraham: King David had the need for a house, and he lived in the city of Jerusalem. Yet he did so as one living in a foreign country:

“hear my prayer, O Yahweh, and give ear at my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for ***I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner***, as all my fathers were” (Psa. 38:12).

We must also live in that spirit. Like Abraham, in the places where we sojourn, we find no permanent abiding place, but look forward with the vision of true faith towards our future residence in “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

The third reference to Abraham in Hebrews 11, is to the occasion when he was commanded to take Isaac, his only accounted son, and to offer him up as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Here, the record takes us back to Genesis chapter 22, where God said:

“take now thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Gen. 22:2).

Notice that again, Abraham went out without knowing where he was to go: to “one of the mountains” that Yahweh would reveal to him. So it was that he went in faith – but notice the words of verse 4:

“then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and ***he saw the place afar off***” (Gen. 22:4).

This phrase is selected by the Spirit, and used again in Hebrews 11:

“these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having *seen them afar off*, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13).

Abraham “saw the place afar off”. What he saw was the place of sacrifice, where he was to offer Isaac as a burnt offering. But the record in Hebrews continues:

“... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:19).

What Abraham saw “afar off”, then, was the place of resurrection. He believed that Isaac, once slain, would rise again from the dead; and although his hand was stayed by the Angel, he nevertheless received him again as one brought from the dead – in a figure. So it is, that in meeting week by week to reflect upon the death and resurrection of Yahweh’s only begotten Son, we also as it were, visit the place of sacrifice and resurrection. Beholding the significance of the emblems of bread and wine with spiritual sight, we partake of them in faith, knowing that Yahweh’s son was sacrificed, and raised up from the dead literally. In Him is the source of life, and to him, we also look, that we also might be delivered from the hand of death.

### ***STRENGTH IN TRIBULATION***

Our position in Christ, is that God has “delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son” in prospect through faith (Col 1:13, Eph 1:11, cp. v 14,2:7). But we will inevitably find that we will face trials, and difficulties because of our separation. As it is written:

“whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye illegitimate, and not sons” (Heb 12:8).

And so the Lord will bring trials upon us to purge us as gold is purified in the fire, (1Pet 1:7, Job 23:10) that we might learn how to do the will of God. As the Psalmist testified, “before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word” (Psalm 119:67,71) and as the apostles taught, “we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22 cp. Rev 7:14). The form and intensity of those trials do vary greatly; but they will come, for they are necessary for our spiritual growth and development into beings suitable for the bestowal of Immortality and Glory.

We must “think it not strange” then (1Pet 4:12), concerning the trials that will come upon us, but we must rather learn to endure, being encouraged and strengthened by our sight of things yet future, to remain steadfast to the end “for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor 5:7). We must rather “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding

joy” (1Pet 4:13). And if we have a vision of that coming revelation of glory firmly fixed in our minds, like the faithful ones in Hebrews 11, we shall have the strength and determination to overcome. As we have seen, like Paul, we shall be able to compare our present difficulties with the blessings of the future, and say:

“though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2Cor 4:16-18).

And for an example of One whose thoughts were always directed towards the world to come, we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, “though he were a Son”, we are informed “yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb 5:8). The Lord Jesus certainly carried a weight; the weight of the cross upon which he was crucified. But his is the supreme example of endurance, for he looked beyond his present suffering to the greater eternal weight of glory laid up for him at his Father’s Right Hand. He, “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of God” (Heb 12:2). It was this joyous vision of the future that was ever set before his mind that ensured his separation from the world, and enabled him to remain faithful even unto death. We then, must be “looking unto Jesus” as an example. Like him, we must have a vision of the future in order for us to maintain our separation, and endure trials faithfully.

### ***THE IMPORTANCE OF A VISION***

In Proverbs 29:18, the importance of such a vision is expressed:

“where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he”.

Here, those who have no vision are contrasted with those who keep the Law of God – the clear implication being, that it is by maintaining a clear focus on the Kingdom that we might be able to remain obedient (i.e. keeping the Law) in times of adversity. But here, the Hebrew word rendered “perish”, literally, is “to be loosed”, and can have the sense of the removal of a garment. Hence, an alternative rendering is, “where there is no vision, the people is made naked” as in the AV margin. Being the brethren of Christ, we must seek to be clothed with righteousness, as with a garment. And rather than to allow ourselves to be drawn into the world around us, allowing our fine white linen garments to be “spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23) the exhortation is given “Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev 16:15). We must therefore remain fully clothed with the purity of righteousness; we must use that vision Scripture presents us with to remain faithful, and separate, to “keep” our garments, that we might not walk naked and shamed before the Son and his Angels at his appearing. Let us therefore, rather than being mindful of the world from which we have come out (Heb 11:15), be as the faithful of all ages, “forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before”

(Phil 3:13). The value of maintaining such a vision of those promises that are “before” us is self-evident – for without it, we cannot remain a holy people prepared for the coming of our Lord. We have Christ Himself to look to as the supreme example, and so let us share his joy that we also might learn to endure, that we might reign with him.

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## **Taking up the Cross of Christ**

We come each week to memorialize our absent Master in taking a piece of bread, and drinking a sip of wine. Simple things, yet profound in their significance as they portray for us the body given, and the blood poured out in a sacrificial death for the forgiveness of our sins, and the furtherance of the Divine Purpose. 1 Peter chapter 2 exhorts us to see in Christ an example for daily living:

“for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).

Our New Testament reading for the day makes reference to how we must take up the cross and follow Messiah: “... he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Mat. 10:38). The same idea is expressed in the Gospel record of Luke, where we have further details given:

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me ...” (Lu. 9:23).

Notice that there are three stages referred to, for those who wish to come after Christ:

1. Let him deny himself
2. Take up his cross daily
3. Follow the Lord Jesus

We shall consider each aspect in turn.

### ***DENYING SELF***

The very first thing to be observed is the spirit of self-denial. In the service of Christ, there is no scope for self-service, putting “number one” first. All must be to the praise of our Father, and the Son of His love – to deny one’s own self is paramount. The denial of self involves the denial of the wiles of our own nature, with all of its affections and lusts. “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 Jno. 2:16-17). The lusts of our own natures must be denied and suppressed, even as the Apostle exhorted:

“put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14).

Notice the point here: “make not provision for the flesh”. Though we experience the desires and the lusts thereof, we must seek to overcome them: and we must certainly not purposefully make provision for them to be fulfilled. Again:

“...if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

Here, the situation is put very bluntly: if we follow the dictates of our own lusts we “shall die”. We must “mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body,” to find life. But even the most spiritually minded among us will still find themselves succumbing to the flesh from time to time. If it was so in the case of Paul the Apostle (see Rom. 7), it is certainly so for us. How then can we find life? Salvation is not of ourselves, as it is written: “by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8). And in this is great comfort. Absolute and total obedience is something which is beyond our power to accomplish, and so the fact that salvation is not of ourselves, but by God’s Grace is a source of great comfort.

The context of this passage in Romans chapter 8, is to do with the development of a carnal mind, or a spiritual mind:

“to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6).

A carnal mind is a mind dominated by carnal thoughts. And conversely, a spiritual mind is a mind dominated by spiritual thoughts. We can develop a spiritual mind by denying ourselves, and seeking after the ways of the living God. To seek first His Kingdom and His Righteousness above all else. This is what will judge us at the last: not whether or not we trip and stumble along the way of life, but whether we have sought to fill our minds with the things of the Spirit: then we shall have life and peace.

### ***DENYING CHRIST***

Another aspect of denial which we must not pass by without mention, is the denial of Christ. This is the opposite of denying self. The inspired narrative records the experiences of Simon Peter, a man great in faith – or so he thought at the time:

“Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Mat. 26:33).

There might be times when we feel as invincible as Peter: we will never leave the path of life, we will never deny our Master, or be offended by an association with him. But the reality is that we are no better than Peter, and probably a lot worse. Jesus replied to him:

“Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice” (Mat. 26:34).

The consequence of denying the Lord in word or deed is expressed thus:

“... he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God” (Lu. 12:9).

Peter, of course, repented, and whilst in a moment of weakness he denied association which Christ, he spent the rest of his life declaring him, and preaching the gospel of salvation. His denials came when asked about his association with the Lord by those he came into contact with - and interestingly, in his epistle, he wrote:

“... sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear ...” (1 Pet. 3:15).

So it was that from being afraid and unprepared, Peter became a messenger of Christ, proclaiming the Gospel, and exhorting others to “be ready” to do that which he had failed to do. The exhortation here is obvious: we must not deny our Master by failing to preach our relationship with him, and instead, we must always be ready to confess and give an answer to those who ask us.

### ***TAKING UP THE CROSS DAILY***

This aspect is something that is often misunderstood. When people experience a particular difficulty in their lives that requires patience to deal with it, they often say, “we all have our cross to bear”. However, when we consider it further, we find that “the cross” here, is something more than the general difficulties that come in life: it is something we must do as part of our service to Christ. That this is so is evident when we remember that taking up the cross is specifically something that we must do when following Christ.

The Master tells us that we must take up our cross “daily”. Accordingly, the Apostle said: “I die daily” (1 Cor. 15:31). Again, he refers to the putting to death of carnal desires:

“... I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ...” (Gal. 2:20)

And again:

“they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24).

But how is it that we crucify the flesh? In our association with Christ through submitting to Baptism, it is said that:

“we are buried with him by baptism into death ...” (Rom. 6:4)

And again:

“if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. 6:5).

So, when we go down into the waters of Baptism, we symbolically undergo a burial, and we resolve to put to death the ways of the flesh – crucifying the flesh with Christ. But our resolve to crucify the flesh is not something that happened once, when we were baptized some time ago: it is something that must be ongoing: “I die daily,” said the apostle. Again, the Master exhorts us to “take up [our] cross daily ...”. This is a feature which also comes out in Romans chapter 6, in the marginal rendering. In verse 3, we read: “know ye not that so many of us were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Here, the word “were” is given an alternative rendering in the margin, of “are”. The difference is this: our baptism is not simply something that took place some time ago, which we can consider as something we did in the past – it is an ongoing process. We continue to live out the spirit of our baptism in our daily lives, dying daily, taking up the cross daily.

In Matthew chapter 11, the Master speaks of the burden which we must bear as part of our service to him. But here, the burden is described as “light” when compared with laboring under the burden of sin:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mat. 11:28-30).

The burden we must bear is the cross of Christ, and although it might bring us into difficult circumstances, we must remember the great “eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Compared with this, our present difficulties appear in their proper context, as “light afflictions”, to become but a fading memory when living in the blessings of the age to come.

### ***FOLLOW ME***

Returning to the example of Simon Peter, we read that on a particular occasion, he stood as an adversary (satan) to the Lord. Jesus was describing to his disciples how that he must be “killed and be raised again the third day” (Mat. 16:21). Peter responded by rebuking Christ:

“Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee” (Mat. 16:22).

Here, Peter took upon himself the role of instructing the Son of the Highest! So the Master put him in his proper place:

“but he turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Mat. 16:23).

Notice the words of Christ: “get thee *behind* me”. Our position as disciples is that of following Christ: behind him. And it is in this context that Christ spoke of how the disciples must “take up his cross and follow me”. Rather than to deny the need of Christ’s sufferings and crucifixion, we need to embrace it, and associate ourselves with it, by taking up our cross, and following Him.

Luke chapter 23 introduces us to another Simon, who quite literally carried the cross of Christ, and followed him. Having been scourged, and harshly treated, the Master could not physically carry his cross alone to the place of crucifixion. So, a certain Simon of Cyrene was taken to help him:

“as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus” (Luke 23:26).

The sense here is not that Jesus put the cross down, and then Simon took it up, and carry it instead. Rather, that Simon carried the cross *with* Christ: he took up the back end, so to speak, and carried it following Jesus who led the way at the front. Simon thus literally associated himself with the crucifixion of Christ, following him, and bearing the cross after, or behind, him.

This helps us to resolve a difficulty that some find in the words of Paul to the Galatians. Firstly we read:

“bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2).

Then we read a few verses later:

“ever man shall bear his own burden” (verse 5).

The difficulty is that if we are bearing our brother’s burden instead of him, how is it that he is said to be bearing his own burden? The answer is in the example of Christ. Simon helped to bare Christ’s burden, just as we must help to bear one another’s burden. Not that we can take that burden away, and carry it instead of our brother, but that rather, we can share it, and help each other bare our cross as we walk in the steps of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We began by citing the words of Peter concerning the example of our Lord Jesus Christ:

“... Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously ...” (1 Pet. 2:21-23).

The steps of Christ lead us through the difficulties which beset us as we labour under the infirmities of a mortal life. They take us through the sufferings which involve crucifying the flesh to the glory which shall follow. So, we are exhorted to:

“look unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

Before the crown of glory, came the crown of thorns. To live a life following the Lord Jesus Christ, is to live a life of crucifying the flesh daily. Crucifixion was the most painful and cruel death imaginable: even so to crucify the flesh is not pleasant – it is painful. But we are not alone in bearing the burden. We saw above, that we are to put on the yoke of Christ (Mat. 11:30). A yoke is something that was born not by one animal alone, but together in pairs. We are not alone in our bearing of the cross of Christ: he is there to help us, and our brethren and sisters help us also – and we them. All of these thoughts come together in the emblems that we partake of week by week. We think of the suffering savior, and what he has done for us, in laying down his life for his friends. Even so, we lay down our lives in service to him, coming after him, denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, and following him in all our ways.

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## **The Transfiguration of Christ**

Matthew chapter 16 concludes with a promise to certain of the disciples of Christ: “Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom” (Mat. 16:28). Then immediately following is the occasion of what we call the Transfiguration of Christ. That this event is the fulfilment of Messiah’s promise is evident from the words of Peter, alluding back to this event, saying that “we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). The event of the Transfiguration therefore, was a taste of the Kingdom to come, when Messiah shall be invested with majesty as his empire shall fill all of the earth. It is this aspect that we shall examine in our present considerations.

Matthew 17:2 describes how the Master was “transfigured” in the presence of certain disciples. The word means “changed”, and is only used twice elsewhere in Scripture, where it denotes the change that the disciples will undergo in preparation for life in the Kingdom:

“... And be not conformed to this world: but be ye **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:2)

“... but we with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are **changed** into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

From these two passages, we learn that the believers must undergo a twofold change, or transformation. Firstly, there is a mental and moral renewal, and second there is the change of nature to that glorious nature currently possessed by the Son, even as by

the Spirit of the Lord (see also Phil. 3:21). These two changes are absolutely needed for entry into the coming Kingdom, and they were prefigured in the change, or Transfiguration of the Lord.

Matthew 17 provides us with another interesting detail. Messiah's "face did shine as the sun" (Mat. 17:2) in its radiant brilliance. This is very significant, for the record describes these events as being performed in the presence of Moses and Elijah (whether it were literally so, involving a resurrection, or whether it was a vision doesn't change the principles here). Moses was previously denied seeing the face of Glory. When he asked to see the Glory of Yahweh, he was told:

"I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of Yahweh before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live" (Exo. 33:19-20).

Although Moses couldn't behold the face of glory, when he ascended into the mount and appeared in the presence of Yahweh, his own face shone with a brightness that frightened the Children of Israel. Exodus 34 describes how Moses had to put a veil over his face, so that Israel would not see the glory that would otherwise be revealed to them.

In these things then, we see a tremendous irony. Moses wanted to see the fulness of Yahweh's Glory – but was prevented from seeing the Face. But the Children of Israel could behold the Face of glory; (albeit in a lesser manifestation through Moses) – yet through fear, they would not go anywhere near it. They avoided Moses, unless he prevented them from seeing that glory by placing a veil over his face. But what are we to make of all this? What are the Spiritual Lessons which these things are intended to convey? We are left in no doubt here, for the Spirit through Paul expounds them for our learning. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians; we learn that the Glory of Moses's face represented the fading Glory of the Law which God gave through him:

"Now if the dispensation of death, carved in letters of stone, came with such splendor that the Israelites could not look at Moses' face because of its brightness, fading as it was, why should not the dispensation of the Spirit be attended with greater splendor? For if there was splendor in the dispensation of condemnation, the dispensation of righteousness must far exceed it in splendor. Indeed, in this case, what once had splendor has come to have no splendor at all, because of the splendor which surpasses it. For if what faded away came with splendor, what is permanent must have much more splendor. Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not see the end of the fading splendor. But their minds were hardened; for to this day, when they read the old covenant, the same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yea, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their minds" (2Cor 3:7-15, RSV).

In these words, a comparison is being made between the Glory (or "splendor" as the word is translated in the RSV) of the "dispensation of condemnation" of the Law, and

the Glory of the “dispensation of righteousness”, of the New Covenant in Christ. And the point of comparison is that the Glory which came through Christ has a “greater splendor” – a greater glory which so greatly surpassed the Glory of the Old Covenant, that it makes that glory appear as nothing! And these principles, the Apostle informs us, are illustrated in the appearance of Moses’ face; for just as the glory of the Law was to fade away, being replaced by the New Covenant, even so Moses face, which shone with glory as he received the Law, faded more and more as time went on until he once again stood in the Divine Presence. The fading Glory of Moses’ face then, ought to have taught Israel that the glorious Law he brought to them would itself fade away, being replaced by something permanent and even more glorious.

In the case of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ then, Moses did behold the face of Glory, shining as the sun. He saw a glory that far exceeded the Law that came through him, in the face of Jesus Christ (see 2 Cor. 4:6).

Being in the presence of the glorified Christ, both Moses and Elijah “appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Lu. 9:31). Here, the Greek word for “decease” is the word for “Exodus”, and is translated “departing” in the context of the people leaving Egypt (Heb. 11:22). It is significant therefore, that upon the mount of Transfiguration, we behold three leaders of an Exodus: Moses leading Israel out of Egypt, Elijah who shall lead the people through the wilderness of the people into the land of their inheritance, and Messiah himself who will lead those who trust in him out of the bondage of sin and death, into the glories of the coming Kingdom.

The record in Luke records for us concerning the Master that:

“as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering” (Lu. 9:29).

We suggest that this transformation of appearance is representative of the transformation of Messiah into Immortality. In the prophecy of Zechariah, he is represented by Joshua as undergoing a change of raiment, which answers to his change of nature. So the angel spoke:

“he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment” (Zech. 3:4).

This change of raiment would therefore appear to have a counterpart in the change of Messiah’s raiment at his transfiguration. This white raiment is promised to those who hold fast to the Truth in the degenerate days of darkness – as in the case of the ecclesia at Sardis:

“Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment ...” (Rev. 3:4-5).

Again, we see that the events of the Transfiguration are representations of better things to come, at the appearing of the Master, and the changing of his servants to share his white garments.

Matthew chapter 17 speaks of how a voice emanated from the cloud that descended upon them:

“... while he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him” (Mat. 17:5).

This cloud was unusual, as it was “a bright cloud”, emanating light, which clouds ordinarily do not do. But this particular cloud represented the Glory of Yahweh: Peter alluded to this, in speaking of the source of the Voice:

“for he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my Son, I whom I am well pleased” (2 Pet. 1:17).

This idea of a cloud representing glory brings to mind a number of allusions. The cloudy pillar that separated Israel from armies of Egypt (Ex. 33:9), represented the presence of their God. Again, 1 Kings chapter 8 describes how that a cloud filled the house which Solomon built, again speaking of the glory of Yahweh (1 Kings 8:10). This latter aspect is particularly relevant to our present considerations:

“And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of Yahweh, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of Yahweh had filled the house of Yahweh” (1 Kings 8:10-11).

Again, just as the disciples could not stand (Mat. 17:6), before the Divine Presence, even so the priests could not stand to minister in the Temple due to the effulgence of glory that was manifested there. In the future, when the house of prayer for all peoples shall be built, the glory will once again dwell in that house, as seen by Ezekiel:

“Behold, the Glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice as like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his Glory ... and the Glory of Yahweh came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east” (Eze. 43:2, 4).

And interestingly, Isaiah had a vision of that same glory, which caused the earth to shine, in terms that allude back to Solomon’s Temple:

“... Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of them that cried, and the house was filled with smoke” (Isa. 6:3-4).

Notice here, the House is filled smoke – which testifies of a fiery judgement having taken place – rather than a cloud. But in that day, all the earth shall be filled with the

glory of Yahweh – all of these things being alluded to in the events of Messiah’s Transfiguration.

The voice that emanated from the bright cloud expressed the Divine approval of Messiah:

“... behold, a voice of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mat. 17:5).

This language echoes that of the prophet Isaiah, in speaking of the Lord Jesus:

“Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:1).

Interestingly, it is in this context that Isaiah also describes Messiah as being a “light of the Gentiles” (Isa. 42:6). The voice that came from heaven signified a Divine Approval of the Son, which was also demonstrated by his shining with the effulgence of Glory.

Returning to the Epistle of Peter, we read in chapter 5 of the Lord Jesus Christ:

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also *a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed*” (1 Pet. 5:1).

Peter was a partaker of the “glory” and “majesty” of the coming Kingdom. He witnessed a vision of future things, when he, with his Master, will be glorified in joyous immortal radiance. In that day, the things he witnessed upon the mount of Transfiguration will become a living reality. He will live and reign with his Messiah—as will we, if we also hold fast a vision of the future.

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## Themes from 1 John 5

Today’s New Testament reading brings together many themes and principles: for the basis of our Exhortation, we shall consider some of them in turn.

### ***THE LOVE OF GOD DEFINED***

Sometimes the concept of Love is set against obedience to laws. Hence it is argued that we need love and compassion, rather than “legalism”. But against this, we see a definition of love in this chapter of 1 John:

“by this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous ... (1 Jno. 5:2-3).

Notice the definition that is given here: “this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments”. So, against the cries of “legalism” by those who prefer not to observe laws, the love of God is defined by the keeping of commandments. If we love God, we will desire to do those things that he commandments to do. But his commandments “are not grievous”. This contrasts with the Pharisees, who really were guilty of legalism:

“all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not. For thy bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Mat. 23:3-4).

By contrast to Messiah’s commandments, which “are not grievous”, the traditions and laws of the Pharisees were heavy burdens – burdens which they would not lift a finger to help with. So the Lord exhorted:

“come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ***For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light***” (Mat. 11:28-30).

His requirements are not oppressive, and the burdens that we bear are things that the true disciples do help each other with: “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). It is necessary to obey “the law of Christ” therefore, but we can help one another to do so.

### ***THE VICTORY***

The apostle continues: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 Jno. 5:4). Faith, then is the basis of our victory in Christ. If we endeavour to follow Messiah in carrying the burden of his cross (Lu. 14:27), sin will not keep us out of the Kingdom – but lack of faith might. It was through lack of faith that a whole generation of Israel were excluded from the land, not sin: “so we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb. 3:19). Faith is the power than can save us, and it is upon the basis of our faith or lack thereof, that we shall be judged by Messiah when he comes again. For the faithful, “then shall be brought to pass that saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory ... but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

This victory will “overcome the world”. This demonstrates that “the world” is something that needs to be overcome! “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1Jno. 2:16-17).

Because all that is in the world centres around the lusts of men rather than honour to the Father, it is written that “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Ja. 4:4). Those who are the children of light must not mingle them-

selves with those who dwell in darkness: “.. have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). Again, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you” (2 Cor. 6:17). Those who wish to share the victory of Christ therefore, must war the same warfare as he, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5). Then, we will join Paul in exclaiming: “thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57).

### ***WATER AND BLOOD***

The Apostle continues:

“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came **by water and blood**, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood ...” (1 Jno. 5:6).

The Lord Jesus Christ then, “came by water and blood”. But what does that mean? It is perhaps not coincidental that his ministry began with water, and ended with blood. Matthew 3 describes how Messiah came into the world (Heb. 10:5), and began his ministry:

“And Jesus when he was baptised, went up straightaway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat. 3:16-17).

This was “when he cometh into the world” (Heb. 10:5), and was made known to Israel. His work then, began with water, and an anointing of the Holy Spirit, as John described: “And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth” (1 Jno. 5:6).

But the end of his ministry was “with blood”. Thus, in the privacy of an upper room, he declared to his disciples who ate and drank in fellowship with him: “... drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins” (Mat. 26:27-28).

It is interesting to notice in connection with this, that the inauguration of the Levitical priests was also associated with water and blood:

“Moses said unto the congregation, this is the thing which Yahweh commanded to be done. And Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water ...” (Lev. 8:6).

And then we read of the slaying of “the ram of consecration”:

“And he slew it, and Moses took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron’s right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the toe of his right foot ...” (Lev. 8:23).

The consecration of the Lord Jesus Christ, then, was by water and by his sacrificial blood. By both of these, he was prepared to be a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, able to save his disciples “to the uttermost”, as he is the possessor of eternal life.

There is another aspect of the Water and Blood: after the Master expired upon the tree, the soldier came and plunged his spear into Jesus’ side:

“one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water ...” (Jno. 19:34).

Reference to the pouring out of blood and water then, is closely emblematic of the laying down of Messiah’s life for his friends. It was the piercing of his side that demonstrated the death of Christ for all to see, as it is written:

“they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn” (Zech. 12:10).

### *ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST*

Salvation can only come through faith in the True Jesus Christ: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). For those who abide in the doctrine and faith in Christ, their salvation is guaranteed. Messiah taught a parable of two ways: the broad way that only leads to death, and the narrow way that only leads to life (see Mat. 7:13-14). Which destination we ultimately arrive at is wholly dependent upon which way we choose to walk along. If we choose the easier, broad way, it is guaranteed that we will be led to destruction. But by the same token, if we choose the narrow way, though it be traversed by only a few, again there is a guaranteed destination. Those who utilise the key of knowledge to unlock the gate and gain entry, will be led along their journey of life to a place of glory and life. So John continues:

“this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 Jno. 5:11-13).

There will be a resurrection of the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15), and a judgment will take place “... all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (Jno. 5:29, see also Dan. 12:2). But the certainty of the giving of life to the doers of good is so certain, that John speaks of it as if it were a present possession: “... that ye know that ye have eternal life”. Of course, those to whom John wrote did die, and are therefore no longer living; but they are only asleep in the dust of the ground, waiting for the great awakening. Their acceptance and salvation is not uncertain by any means: their hope is the source of stability in the turmoil of life, hence it is an “anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast ...” (Heb.

6:19). An anchor which is not sure and steadfast is of no use whatsoever! So it is with the hope of those who believe the true Gospel hope. So Paul spoke to the faithful at Colosse: "... for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:3-4). This is the unshakable hope that Christ's brethren have, and so they are those who "love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8). We look forward to that day with an earnest desire to be with the Lord, longing for the day of his coming.

### ***HEARING PRAYER***

Whatever adverse circumstance we are enduring in life, there is always the recourse to prayer. Taking the matter to the Lord, in the anticipation that His Wisdom will prevail in our situation. So John continues: "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" (1 Jno. 5:14-15).

But the Old Testament records the example of one who prayed, yet who was not heard. One who should have overcome the world, yet who was himself overcome by the world. We refer to the example of king Saul: "... when Saul enquired of Yahweh, Yahweh answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (1 Sam. 28:6). He had set himself against the ways of Yahweh, refusing to destroy the Amalekites, persecuting his successor, and destroying the priests. He was a man in which God took no pleasure, and was taken away in his wrath (Hos. 13:11). His purpose was to free Israel from the domination of the Philistines (1 Sam. 9:16), yet instead, he was defeated by them. Here is arguably the most desolate situation a man kind find himself in: facing certain destruction by his enemies, and having his prayers for deliverance unanswered, and unheard.

According to John, prayers should be "according to his will". This means that we must know what the Will of God is, and endeavour to pray in accordance with it. The example of Messiah is again relevant here: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat. 26:39). And "he went away the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done" (Mat. 26:42), and then he "prayed the third time, saying the same words" (Mat. 26:44). In Hebrews 10, the Lord is cited as saying "Lo, I come to do thy Will, O God" (Heb. 10:9), and this is what we see in Gethsemane: a gentle resignation to the doing of his Father's Will, and not his own. Here is the supreme example for us to follow!

The Apostle continues:

"... and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life" (1 Jno. 5:20).

Our eternal salvation is bound up with knowing the only True God. The deities of other religions are as impotent to save as the idols of wood and stone that Israel of old

worshipped. Even in so-called “christian” circles, the only True God is not worshipped, and neither is His Son: they instead prostrate themselves before a mythical triune god, which finds an existence only in their deluded minds. Our salvation depends upon recognising the God of Israel, and Jesus Christ his Son: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent” (Jno. 17:3). Again, the word of Yahweh through Jeremiah: “But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Yahweh which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith Yahweh” (Jer. 9:24).

In our considerations today, we have covered much ground: we have examined the importance of having a love for God, which is shown by obeying the commandments of His Son. We have seen the faith which gives us the victory with Christ, the water and the blood which are emblems of Christ in his ministry and sacrifice, and the hope of eternal life through Knowing the only True God - by contrast to the idols of worldly thinking. And we have the example of Christ as our redeemer, who came to “do” the Will of God out of love for Him and his brethren. Let us heed the principles brought to our attention through 1 John chapter 5, knowing that our eternal redemption is bound up with which path we choose to walk along, and glorying in the knowledge of the Only True God.

*Christopher Maddocks*

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## **Enforcement versus Forgiveness**

The claim is frequently being posted online that the Lord Jesus Christ has paid our debts, and it is by him making this payment that our forgiveness is made possible. To give just two recent representative examples:

'When Jesus told us to pray for forgiveness of our debts as we forgive our own debtors, He knew who would be the one *to pay the debt*. as He would hang on the cross He would say, “It is finished” ... *the debt is paid!*'

“We could not pay the debt required (perfect life, perfect obedience), even if we had the desire to. Instead, *we have been forgiven our debt because Jesus has paid it*, absorbing the cost into himself. “The innocent judged guilty while the guilty one walks free.”

In these posts, we have a confusion made between Enforcement and Forgiveness. These are mutually exclusive ideas, as the Scriptures plainly show, and as we shall demonstrate. In Matthew 18:23-35 we have a parable of the Master which illustrates this very point. In the parable, a certain king was owed a large sum of money by one of his servants. So the Master describes:

“But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.

The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt” (Mat. 18:25-27).

Notice that in this parable, enforcement and forgiveness are two different things. If the king enforced the debt, that would be a different circumstance to him forgiving the debt. Forgiving the debt involved the exercise of compassion, whereas enforcing the debt would be detrimental to the one who was unable to pay. The king “forgave him the debt,” and it therefore would not have to be paid. The parable continues to describe how that the forgiven servant was himself owed a much smaller sum by one of his fellowservants. But he chose not to exercise compassion:

“he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt” (Mat. 18:28-30).

Notice that here again, there is a difference between forgiveness and enforcement: the debt was *not* forgiven by the uncompassionate servant - he instead insisted that it had to be paid. Hence the king, upon hearing of this unforgiving approach reinstated the original debt owed:

“O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him” (Mat. 18:32-34).

According to the principles of this parable, the compassionate approach is to cancel the debt, and the hard approach is to enforce it. Love is to forgive the debt, but to enforce the debt does not show love. Therefore, to say that “we have been forgiven our debt because Jesus has paid it” is a contradiction in terms - if the debt had to be enforced and paid, by definition, it is not forgiven, and there is no scope for the expression of compassion. We did ask our adversaries to explain substitution using the terms of this parable, but not unsurprisingly, the invitation was declined.

But how do they explain this parable in the context of their theory? Like this:

“Chris your “proof text” is talking about US forgiving someone who owes US. So, not relevant to what we are talking about. This is typical misuse of the word yet again”

So according to the adversary, our “proof text” is “not relevant” to our discussion of how God forgives us, and that to claim otherwise is a “typical misuse of the Word.” However, this statement specifically contradicts the Lord Himself, who concludes his parable by saying:

“So *likewise* shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts *forgive not* every one his brother their trespasses” (Mat. 18:35).

The point that the Master is making, is that God will not forgive His servants if they do not forgive each other “from your hearts”. If we choose to enforce the debts owed to us by others, instead of forgiving them, we will not be forgiven our debt. Hence the main focus of the parable is to demonstrate what our detractor says is “not relevant”!

This sentiment is again expressed by the Master elsewhere:

“... for *if ye forgive* men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But *if ye forgive not* men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mat. 6:14-15).

According to the principles of the Master’s parable, if you owe me some money, and I choose to cancel the debt, that is loving, compassionate and forgiving. But if I choose rather to enforce the debt and insist that somebody else pays it instead of you, I am not being loving, compassionate or forgiving. The difference between forgiveness and enforcement is as obvious and plain as it could be.

Again, in Luke chapter 7, we read of Messiah’s forgiveness of a particular woman in Simon the Pharisee’s house. Jesus spoke another parable:

“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, *he frankly forgave them both*. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged” (Lu. 7:41-43).

Again, we see the compassion of the creditor in forgiving, or as some versions render it, “cancelling”, the debt. He did not require someone else to pay it instead: it was simply cancelled: “he frankly forgave them both”.

This confusion of Forgiveness and Enforcement gives rise to another serious error. Our adversary (cited above) describes the substitutionary theory: “The innocent judged guilty while the guilty one walks free.” But there is no passage in Scripture that states Messiah was “judged guilty” in any respect - on the contrary, the very idea is grotesque, and contrary to the basic tenor of the holy writ! The true position is expressed in the Apostle’s exhortation, which Messiah’s compassionate brethren will follow:

“... be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, *forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Eph. 4:32).

*Christopher Maddocks*

## Righteousness, Judgment, Mercy, and Works

(By brother Robert Roberts, from Shorthand Notes by brother John Butler)

Romans 11.—There is no lesson more conspicuous in this chapter, than the one teaching that we are called to righteousness, and that our ultimate destiny in Christ will depend upon our relation to righteousness. It is very important to realise that lesson, for a variety of reasons. The first reason is, that our own natures continually incline to ways of unrighteousness: there is a struggle in ourselves: “when we would do good, evil is present with us.” The second reason is, that we are living in a very unrighteous world, where many things that are abhorrent in the sight of God, are considered to be not wrong; where indeed it is practically the case that evil is called good, and good, evil; light, darkness, and darkness, light. The third may be, that we live in a time when it is a religious sentiment that it doesn’t matter whether we are righteous or not—that without any qualification, Christ has been made our righteousness, and, therefore, there remains nothing for us to do, beyond simply believing on him.

These three things work together to make our walk in righteousness a very difficult thing. We require to be continually on our guard, to be diligent, to have our eyes open, and not for one moment to surrender the teaching of the word of God, to either our own desires, the pressure of current sentiment, or the vagaries of a perverted theology. It is worth while to stop and consider what righteousness is. The question admits of a simple answer, and that answer, though short, comprehends every phase in which righteousness may be contemplated; and that is, that righteousness is the doing of those things that God has commanded, and the avoidance of those things which God has prohibited. In itself, the word “righteousness” expresses in the abstract, those thoughts, words and actions that are right. It does not, of course, inform us what thoughts, words and actions are right. For this, we are referred to other sources. The world draws upon its own imaginations, reasonings and conclusions, in its efforts, so far as it puts forth any, to ascertain what is right. And thus in the world, a devout mind has great difficulty in arriving at a knowledge of what is right. To us there is one very decided standard of right, and that is, the will of God. This in fact is the only standard of right: our conceptions of righteousness can only arise in connection with Him; for the very idea of righteousness implies a law or rule higher than ourselves, to which we are amenable. Therefore, our only course is to study what He has made known to be right, and to turn ourselves to the habitual doing of it, and to the eschewing of all those things He has declared to be wrong.

Another fact is introduced to view in this chapter: that our righteousness or unrighteousness has relation to a time when it will be made manifest, and have effect in the fixing of our destiny. Paul says that “God will render to every man according to his deeds, in the day when He shall judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.” New it is very important to realise this fact. It is one that is continually proclaimed throughout the New Testament scriptures; and our recognition of it is likely to have a very reformatory effect upon our minds. It enables us to see that the judgment to be disclosed will in one sense be no secret; that it will but be a disclosure of what is now true in every man’s life. It will be a declaration of divine decision upon facts already existent, and known in every man’s own bosom. The nature of the decision is the only thing we

don't know. We know there will be no partiality, no favour and no disfavour; but a clear, impartial, just judgment, which takes its type, its cue, its result, so far as we are concerned, from what we have been. In view of this, the present time appears the most important time to us—a great deal more important than judgment itself; because the judgment is only a disclosure of the present—a judicial proclamation of what we are and how we actually stand.

People sometimes forget this, and are all the while straining forward to the future. It is right to keep our eye on the future—we should never take it off the future; but we must never ignore the immense importance of the present time. We are apt to think that the judgment will work a sort of miracle for us—as if resurrection will turn us up in a different state of character from that which pertains to us now. This is a very great mistake. It is one of the mistakes of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy is wrong in every thing, from top to bottom. This is one of its fallacies, which forces itself upon our attention this morning. It declares in so many words, “there are the elect and the non-elect; the elect will be saved—the nonelect won't; or in another form, it says Those who believe in the name of Christ, will be saved, and those who do not believe won't be saved; it is not a matter of works at all.” Under the power of these delusions, inherited by birth, we have been accustomed to blindly trust to the future, as if it would do a new thing for us; instead of which, there is nothing more true, than that we shall just stand at the judgment seat as we walk now in our time of probation. The routine of our daily life becomes interesting, when we remember this. Our daily life is the material out of which we are fabricating for ourselves the good opinion of Christ, or the reverse, for God will render to every man according to his deeds. Now we can only know what in our daily life will be well-pleasing to him, by studying the Scriptures, and particularly Paul's letters. It would almost appear that these letters were written for the very purpose of instructing believers in the kingdom, as to what it is in their private lives that God requires. To get at this knowledge, so as to be available in daily actions, we must cultivate familiarity with these writings. By continual reading, we get to see many things we should not know. Some people, for instance, may have the idea that they are in such a position that it is impossible for them to do anything for Christ. It may be that they are exceedingly poor, and that, being poor, they are compelled to devote the greatest part of their time and strength to the duty of providing a livelihood, and this necessity presses upon them every day in their lives. The only day they have is Sunday, and they require that for rest. They may distress themselves with the idea that they have no opportunity for doing anything to work out their salvation. Now this is a mistake, a very great mistake. Those who labour under it do themselves an injustice; for we learn from the letters of Paul that in whatsoever condition a man or woman may be placed, he or she can in that condition walk faithfully to the truth, and acceptably in the sight of God.

The principle upon which they will be judged is:—“every man according to what he has received.” Jesus distinctly says that to whom much is given, of them much will be required; so that the principle of absolute justice will work in every individual case. Nobody should feel discouraged because their opportunities are few; all that is required of them is that they do what they can; that they be faithful in the least. There is one method of serving Christ that such mourners of small opportunity may not be aware of, and not being aware of it, they may miss the opportunity, although it is actually in

reference to the thing they are doing everyday. A brother may be in the employment of a very hard master, whose service he finds to be very disagreeable, and in whose company he feels alienated from everything that pertains to Christ; and he may imagine that he is having a great deal of waste time thrust upon him. He may think to himself that if he could only get into a position where he would be able to visit the sick, contend for the faith, distribute tracts, or something of that sort, he would be of some use; but that as it is, his time is thrown away. Now Paul has given us to understand that a man in such circumstances may serve Christ by simply construing in his own mind what he is compelled to do for a taskmaster, as a thing done for Christ. He says: (Col. 3:22–25, ) “Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons” So that an individual may actually turn to spiritual account the apparently sin-defiled circumstances of his daily calling.

The mistake would be for him to exclude Christ from his thoughts and only to think of his master, and only to serve him, as Paul here says, with eye-service, that is attending to duty so long as you are under scan, but doing your own way as soon as your master’s back is turned. And so with regard to other little matters—serving each other, waiting upon each other, doing good turns to each other, using hospitality without grudging when the occasion arises, ministering whenever there is an opportunity—all these things can be done on a small scale by everybody, and it is not the scale that determines the acceptability of the act in the sight of God. It is most important to remember this—it is not the size of an action, but the spirit of it, and the relation of it to what is possible with us.

We see this signally illustrated in the familiar case of the widow woman, who cast into the treasury her two mites. Jesus said she had cast in more than the rich people, because they had simply put in a little of their abundance, whereas she had given all the surplus she had remaining. Keeping this in view, everybody will realise his duty. There are no two persons with the same powers of mind, or with the same condition of circumstances, or the same opportunities, in a social point of view. Therefore the same rule of judgment cannot be applied to all. In one sense, every man is his own standard. If we fix our eyes upon a fixed standard that we must all come up to, we shall oftentimes be discouraged at the impossibility of coming up to it. What we have to do, is to come up to the highest that is possible with us—to do what we can,—to be faithful in that which we have. I do not mean in money alone; but time, strength, opportunity, everything that we possess. If this principle is acted out, there will be a place for the one-talent servants as well as the ten. The judgment of every one according to deeds, will not be a judging according to a fixed standard; but a judgment in the light of each man’s capacity. It would not otherwise be a just judgment. “To whom much is given, of him will much be required.” An account from one man may call for censure and condemnation, which in another man will be the basis of approval. The standard of the judgment will not be a fixed one. The scale is a shifting scale, according to the capabilities of the individual; and that is why the judgment will be conducted, and must be conducted by a Judge “who shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, nor reprove after the hearing of His ears;” but by divine penetration, will know what is in every

man brought before Him, and give a righteous judgment to the utmost exactitude of infallibility.

It is also a reason why we are not permitted to judge, because we lack the principal element of judgment, in our ignorance of those who may come under judgment. We may say “such a person has done so-and-so,” and we may comprehend the nature of the thing done; but what we cannot understand is the relation of the thing done to the capacity of the doer, and to his inclination to do other things from which he has refrained. This is exactly where Jesus is qualified to be our judge. “He knoweth what is in man,” as John says; and he can discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. He can measure the exact capacity, and estimate the particular forces in play; and can therefore decide infallibly what ought to have been done, and what ought not to have been done. There is another thing that qualifies Jesus to be judge, and that is, “because he is the Son of Man.”—(John 5:27) God has committed all judgment unto him, because he is the Son of Man. We can see great wisdom in this. An angel, or any being not touched with the feeling of human infirmity, would not have been qualified to sit as our judge, because he would not have been able to comprehend the exact relation between our ability and our performance. But Jesus was tempted in all points as we are. He was a man in every sense, though he was the son of God, and, therefore, when he judges men and women, he will be able to give a just judgment. He will take everything into account. There is great consolation in this view of the judgment. We shall have a merciful judge; it is distinctly stated that mercy will characterise his judgment; that mercy will rejoice against judgment.

On the other hand, there is this to be considered: He says “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” We shall get at the judgment, the kind of usage we have dealt to others. This is evidenced by the parable of a certain man who owed his lord a sum of money; his lord said “Pay me what you owe me.” He replied “I am too poor;” and his lord—who was a merciful judge—forgave him. The servant goes out and meets some one who owes him a trifling sum, and he demands the money, saying “I must have it immediately.” “I cannot pay it,” says the poor debtor. “You must.” “I cannot.” “You must go to prison, then;” and he sent him to prison. It is recorded that the servants of the lord were very sorry when they saw this, and they reported the matter to their master, who had the unmerciful man brought before him. The master said to him “Ungrateful man! Did not I forgive thee that which thou owedst me, and yet you have done thus harshly by a man owing so much less,” and he delivered him to the tormentors. “So,” said Christ, “shall your heavenly Father do unto you, if ye, from the heart, forgive not every one of you his brother his trespasses.” If we are not merciful in our judgment now, we must not look for mercy when Christ comes; but “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

Our judgment must be tempered with mercy. We ought to remember the weakness of those by whom we are surrounded. We ought to know our own weakness, and thus be prepared to extend consideration to those who are in offence. If we exact to the utmost farthing, letting nothing slip, but insist upon a precise and explicit confession from everybody who may happen to offend us, the judgment will be for ourselves a very dreadful visitation; because Jesus declares we shall be treated then as we treat now. So, although there is much cause for consolation in view of the judgment, there is yet the

other side. Jesus will be merciful, as he was with his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he came and found them sleeping. “The spirit indeed, is willing,” he said, “but the flesh is weak.” He did not chide them, because it was an hour of the day when nature’s forces were gone, and he excused them.

Though we shall have the same consideration, at the same time, we must remember, that the judgment will be according to our deeds. Jesus will not pass over an unrighteous life. Christ’s mercy will not go the length of ignoring the actual state of the case. He will not accept an individual who has proved himself unworthy. We must ever remember all sides of the question, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, that without holiness no man shall see God; that except we leave all that we have, we cannot be Christ’s disciples. Our present duty is to surrender every other hope and scheme, and object of life, to give ourselves entirely to Christ. A man who has loved other things more than Christ—who has been ashamed of Christ in the day of Gentile prosperity—who has devoted his abilities to business more than to him—who has served himself and not Christ—must remember that Christ’s mercy will not go the length of altering the state of the account. The account is of our own making; all that Christ does is to strike the balance: we cannot do that; We could not judge ourselves. We cannot say who shall be saved—whether we ourselves shall be saved. We can only rejoice in hope and tremble whilst working out our own salvation. We do have hope in Christ’s mercy, and consolation in the assurance that he will do that which is just and merciful, but there is a great deal to turn the scales the other way. Christ will only make manifest what exists now. So the present time is the time for us: the judgment will add nothing to the account. As at an examination in a school, the state of the prizes is an indication of what has been going on in the interval, so the disclosures at the judgment are based upon what is now in progress. But when we look beyond the judgment-seat, and imagine ourselves for a moment the blessed of God, we see something we very much burn to be—something to encourage us to continue steadfast.

This is the great merit that will be recognized—a patient continuance in well-doing. We are to do as Paul says here: “by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality.” That implies a good deal of trouble; for a man’s patience is not exercised when there is no trouble. A patient continuance in well-doing is a tenacious abiding, day by day, in the midst of discouraging circumstances, and in the face of trying difficulties, in the performance of those things that God has required of us. There is great consolation for those who are walking in this patient way, but none for those who live in pleasure—those who are dead while they live. We must fellowship the suffering of Christ, before we shall be privileged to fellowship his glory; but when the battle is over, we shall feel the truth of what Paul says “that the sufferings of the present time are nothing to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” Just for the present, we are in the Valley of Humiliation; we are in a state of weakness and sin, but keeping our eye steadfastly fixed on the morning dawn that has been so long held up in promise to human view, we are enabled to persevere and work until the night comes, when no man can work—a night that has come to all who have gone before us, and may come to us, but which will quickly be ended by the bright rising of that Sun of Righteousness, who will usher in eternal day.—Editor.

*The Christadelphian 1868 page 195–198.*