

THE BANNER OF TRUTH

“Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth” (Ps. 60:4)

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Such Distress is a Witness to Faith's Genuineness

Does the Present Evil Trouble You?

By Fred O. Blakely

*“. . . Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the
filthy lives of lawless men . . .” (II Pet. 2:7, NIV).*

Through the years, we have observed that the closer people are to God the more they are disturbed by the error and evil around them. Those in alienation from the Holy One may be complacent, or even indulgent, but not the ones who live in Him. They are troubled by the variances from the divine Nature and will, in both themselves and others, and constantly protest against them. Superficial optimists may see only the bright side and exhort them to keep smiling. The ones who have the Mind of God, however, are not easily dissuaded. The ugly fact of the matter is, everything is far from bright and cheerful in this dark and sinful world; only a fool closes his eyes to that grim reality and seeks to grinningly act as if it were.

Its Precedent in Scripture. The habitual dissent and remonstrance by the godly used to puzzle and bother us. Why were the people who had the Most High for their Father so given to finding fault? This was the case until, as with the Psalmist, we “went into the sanctuary of God” (Ps. 73:16-17). Then we began to understand. We found, for example, that such antagonism to fallacy and wickedness was by no means peculiar to the comparatively few saints of our personal acquaintance. It has been characteristic of God's children through the ages. Because they have imbibed the Spirit of Him who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and” cannot “look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13), it is natural for them to groan under the burden of sin, and to reprove and rebuke it.

God Himself, you will recall, “hath a controversy” with His people, and more especially with the world in dissociation from them (Mic. 6:1-2). He “hewed them by the Prophets,” and slew them by the words of His mouth (Hos. 6:4-7). Indeed, the Most Holy is “angry with the wicked every day.” And, unless they repent and turn from their evil and to Him, He will “whet His sword,” and let loose His arrows of death against them (Ps. 7:11-12). Thus, the Prophets were continually contending with Israel, as the Apostles and the Lord Jesus were quarreling with the church. And so today we who have the same Spirit react identically to the sin that confronts us. With the Psalmist, we declare, “Through Thy precepts I get understanding: therefore, I hate every false way” (Ps. 119:104); again, “I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave unto me” (Ps. 101:3).

Its Identification with Jesus. As one experiences within himself this warfare of God's Spirit against sin, it is heartening

to know that he hereby has a sure mark of identity with Jesus Christ the righteous. Mingled with His censure of the Ephesian church for having left its “first love,” is a commendation which establishes that identity. “But this thou hast,” asserted He, “that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate” (Rev. 2:6; cf. v. 15). In loathing the sensuous doctrine and practice of that apostate cult, the brethren at Ephesus thus had fellowship with the glorified Christ, since He, too, hated them, and it was His Spirit in the Ephesians that prompted them to do so.

This opposition of the Savior to sin, and His grief over it, was clearly apparent during the days of His flesh. On His last journey to Jerusalem, we are told that “when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it” (Lk. 19:41-44). “Thou that killest the Prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee,” He lamented, “how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matt. 23:34-39). It is to be noted that Paul similarly grieved over the rebellious nation of the Jews (Rom. 9:1-5), as, of course, did all who had the Spirit of Christ.

Its Witness to God's Approval. The witness to one's approval by God which his innate antipathy to evil bears is also of great consolation to him who has it. This testimony is set forth in Ezekiel's vision of God's retribution against idolatrous Israel. As the six men approached with their slaughter weapons, ready for the grim work of destruction, the Lord stayed their hands. “Go through the midst of the city,” He ordered another man among them who was “clothed with linen” and had “a writer's inhorn by his side,” “and set a mark upon the foreheads” of certain ones, who were to be spared from the wrath to come. These were the persons “that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst” of Jerusalem. Everyone else—“old and young, both maids, and little children, and women”—were to be slain, with no compassion whatever being shown (Ezek. 9:1-6). Distress over sin here became the identifying characteristic of the people of God. God remembered such fellowship with His hatred of transgression, and, in the day of His visitation, spared those who had it. See also Malachi 3:16-17.

Close parallel between this revelation to Ezekiel and that to John is certainly obvious (Rev. 7:1-3). In the latter case, the Apostle beheld four angels holding in abeyance God's purposed destruction upon the earth. “Another angel ascending from the east,” which had “the seal of the living God,” restrained them. “Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees,” he commanded, till his own work was finished. That work was to seal “the servants of our God in their foreheads.” Thus, are the eyes of the Lord on them that fear Him and weep for His cause (Ps. 34:15-16). “Come not near any man upon whom is the mark,” He charges His executioners (Ezek. 9:6). Whatever the storm of the divine wrath against sin carries off, they who are so identified will surely be saved, and must remain.

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Make the Most of Today

The Ninety-Fifth Psalm. In Psalm 95, which begins as a hymn of praise to the Lord Jehovah, there appears a solemn admonition to be attentive to God's voice. In the middle of verse seven of that psalm there is a noteworthy shift in the mood and tenor of what is being declared from heartfelt praise to warning. It becomes evident that the Lord God remembers the temptation in the wilderness (cf. Num. 14) as though it were yesterday and here He cautions men in this psalm to not appeal to this part of His nature through unbelief and hardness of heart. Hear Him now plead, through the psalmist, with those who are straying, or who have a tendency to be wayward:

"*Today* if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Ps. 95:7-8). "*To-day*, oh that ye would hear His voice!" (ASV). "O that *today* you would hearken to His voice!" (RSV). "*Today*, if you hear His voice" (NIV).

Paul's Taking Up of the Solemn Refrain. Centuries later, the Apostle Paul, moved by the Holy Spirit, takes up the solemn refrain once again in his epistle to the Hebrews. Here the words are directed primarily against those who were lingering on the first principles of the doctrine of Christ and were not themselves going on to perfection in Christ. They were drifting away from the very message which drew them to the Savior at the beginning.

"Wherefore (as the Holy Spirit says, *Today* if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:7-8). "Today, when you hear His voice" (RSV).

In the following exhortation can be seen the absolute necessity of the gatherings of the saints. As we exhort (encourage, minister to) one another, we are actually assisting each other in keeping our hearts tender to the Lord. The gatherings of the saints can have this vital ministry of keeping each one of us within hearing distance of God's voice. Consider the following words of the Apostle in this connection.

The Saints' Ministry One to Another. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called *Today*; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end. While it is said, *Today* if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Heb. 3:13-15). "As long as it is *still* called 'Today,'" (v. 13, NASB). "Today, when you hear His voice," (v. 15, RSV).

The Limitation of a Certain Day. Since God has limited a certain day (KJV) for entering into His rest, let each of us be certain that we do not go beyond the limit. Hear the Apostle now quote from this same Psalm again, almost sounding repetitive. (If he sounds repetitive, it is because he is condescending to our dullness of hearing.)

"Again He designates a certain day, saying in David, '*Today*,' after such a long time, as it has been said: '*Today*, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.' For if Joshua had given them rest" [when he led the people into the land of Canaan], "then He would not afterward have spoken of another day" (Heb. 4:7-8, NKJV).

Although the land of Canaan was indeed a land of rest from Egyptian bondage, yet it imperfectly foreshadowed the eternal rest which has been prepared of God for His people. There were yet enemies in the land of Canaan which had to be driven out if the children of Israel were to take possession of that which God had promised. But with regard to the rest which has been reserved for us of God, hear now the conclusion of the Apostle.

"He that is entered into His (that is, God's) rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:10-11).

Some Final Thoughts. As we have indicated above, some of the other translations render "if ye *will* hear His voice" (KJV, NKJV), simply, "*if you hear His voice*" (NASB, NIV), or "*when you hear His voice*" (RSV). It seems that, in each of these expressions, the translators were striving to capture various aspects of the thought being expressed here.

"*If you hear His voice*," puts the supreme emphasis upon men responding, without hesitation, to God's voice. Everything else must be regarded as being of lesser importance, not worthy of being compared to the hearing of God's voice.

"*When you hear His voice*," emphasizes the certainty that God speaks to men without partiality, and particularly so in the gospel, and with regard to salvation in Christ.

"*If you will hear His voice*," highlights the unmistakable connection between the hearing of God's voice and man's volition. The underlying assumption here is that there is unspeakably great benefit connected with hearing it, and especially with wanting to hear it.—*Editor*

Second Coming Booklet Available

Articles by the former Banner editor, Fred O. Blakely, on the second coming of the Lord Jesus may be obtained in booklet form from Michael Blakely, 4437 Chatham Drive, Brownsburg, IN 46112. His telephone number is 317-293-9745. Brother Mike has compiled all nine of these articles into an attractive-looking forty-four page booklet. You may write or call Brother Blakely at the address and phone number given here for information on obtaining a copy, or copies, for yourself.—*Editor*

"All I meet I find assists me
In my path to heavenly joy;
Where, though trials now attend me,
Trials never more annoy.

"Blest there with a weight of glory,
Still the path I'll ne'er forget,
But, exulting, cry, It led me
To my blessed Savior's seat!"

About our Adversary. Satan, the god of this world is a liar, a deceiver, a hater, and destroyer. There is no good in him for he did not abide in the truth (cf. Jn. 8:44). The things which are seen give the Devil an advantage. Legion is the number of those who are willing to bow down to temporal lusts and to the things which are seen. The whole world lay in Satan's power until Christ the promised One came. The Savior destroyed him who had the power of death. —*Gene Hutchcraft*

We Wait in Temporal Dwellings. We wait for the coming of the Lord in temporal dwellings, namely our bodies. And we struggle against the law at work in our members, which opposes the law of our minds (cf. Rom. 7:21-23). Our involvement in this is critical, and it is not automatic! —*Gene Hutchcraft*

The gospel is a declaration of independence; it declares our freedom from sin, freedom from the law, and the freedom from a defiled conscience. —*Robert Cobb*

Men of this world live in the fear of death, self-condemned with no route of escape.—*Gene Hutchcraft*

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If you don't have peace, you need to know God better.—*Michael Lohrman*

The table of the Lord represents a significant victory! Christ has overcome the world, He has put away sin, He has abolished death, He has set at nought the Devil. The table is a challenge to us to follow the Savior more closely.—*Michael Lohrman*

Receptivity in Russia. "I was struck by the fact that, in this nation (Russia) that had tried to outlaw God, there was a very real hunger for God and for the Bible. People would be (seen) reading the Bible on the street and in their yards. I couldn't help contrasting it with America today, where people are so very hard. It has given me a new burden for my own country and for Miller Beach, where I live."—*Paul Orner, a local banker who recently visited Russia, taken from Merrillville Herald News (6/22/00)*

Divers Musings for the Times

"In the first three days of creation God was forming; in the second three He was filling that which He had already formed."—*David Maddack*

The Removal of Time-proven Landmarks. "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Prov. 22:28). For centuries, the terms B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (*Anno Domini*, that is, in the year of our Lord) have been commonly accepted historical reference points. Dates of events in ancient history were charted according to the number of years before the birth of Christ. Events occurring in the last 2000 years have been generally designated A.D.

But now the appearance of new date terminology can be seen more and more, usurping the place of the time-proven landmarks. Instead of B.C., the designation now coming into frequent usage is BCE (before the Common Era). And CE (the Common Era) is gradually taking the place of A.D. In our judgment the new terms clearly evidence further hatred and rejection of the Lord and His Christ on the part of men. In addition, the new designations introduce more confusion into men's thinking than clarity. What is the so-called *Common Era*? Why is it called that? What makes it *common*? *Common* by what standard and in what sense? Who had the right to substitute *common* to be the appropriate label for this time period?

Suffice it to say that the old designations are yet firmly established in the shadow of the new ones, and the new ones are nothing more than cover-ups for the old ones, fashioned by men who are ashamed of the Lord that bought them.—*Editor*

Far Removed, But Yet Relevant. Men are often tempted to think that times and events far removed from us have no relevant bearing upon living today. But there are things recorded in Scripture, which clearly reveal God's mind about creaturely rebellion (I Cor. 10:1-12; II Pet. 2:4-6; Jude 5-7; Heb. 3, 4, etc.), and which are calculated to shout with clarion voice across the centuries and millennia of time right down to those living in the present generation.

The creatures referred to here had great incentives not to sin. Some of them *even* lived in the very presence of Jehovah (the angels that sinned); others were *even* in covenant relationship with Him (Israel), and some were not in such a relation, but were nevertheless created in God's image and likeness (the Gentiles). *The response of the Lord God to disobedience and rebellion is clearly consistent in all three of these cases.*

Thus, it can be seen that there is really no advantage in being near to God (the evil angels were once near to Him), or in being related to Him by a covenant (old or new covenant, it matters not), or in merely being created in God's likeness, if such advantages are not made full proof of by the ones so advantaged "while it is called Today" (Heb. 3:13). The glorious nature of the God, who sent His Son into the world "that we might live through Him" (I Jn. 4:9), is consistent only with an unalloyed loving responsiveness and allegiance to Him on the part of all His creatures. To willfully and persistently ignore, or resist Him, is to invite His certain "wrath" and "sore displeasure" (Ps. 2:5).

All of these things were "written for our admonition (i.e., warning, instruction), upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I Cor. 10:11). Let us, therefore, be duly admonished by the sober consideration of these matters.—*Editor*

The Message of Hebrews

The Great Encompassing Realities. There are august realities outside of the realm of nature that bear greatly upon us all. For example, there are such divine Personalities as "God, the Judge of all," and "Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant," and "the Spirit of grace." We also read of "an innumerable company of angels," and of the "spirits of just men made perfect," and of "the general assembly and church of the Firstborn which are written [or, enrolled] in heaven" (Heb. 12:22-24).

There is a blessed place in the unseen realm called "Mount Zion" and the "city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," where the children of God of all ages shall take up their eternal residence. Thrones are there in that immortal domain that are awaiting the full and unencumbered occupancy of "the people of the saints of the most High" (Dan. 7:27).

There is a blessed resource in the heavenlies for the people of God, while they are yet in this world, called "the blood of sprinkling." This speaks of Christ's indispensable advocacy with the Father in our behalf, and is a wellspring of experiential cleansing and recovery from sin when we are overcome.

Nature, and particularly the natural mind, obstruct the sunrays of glory that would continually shine in upon us from the ramparts of heaven and the heavenly throne. "The whole earth is full of His glory," declared the Prophet (Isa. 6:3). Yet the natural man is just as undiscerning of these things as Balaam of the angel that stood in his way with a drawn sword (cf. Num. 22:22-27). "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

The Great Onlooking Personages. The Father of spirits, the glorified Son, the Holy Spirit, the four living creatures, the four and twenty elders, the cherubim, the seraphim, and an innumerable company of angels are among the great personages giving attendance to the matter of eternal redemption. How then can men remain casual regarding the great salvation in Christ to the consideration of being observed, moment by moment, by such onlookers as these?

The Great Salvational Utterances. There have been covenants made, oaths uttered, and decrees declared in ancient times and in unseen realms, spoken by God Himself, upon which eternal redemption and everlasting life depend, and from which "the promise of life" originates (see, for example, Ps. 2:7; 110: 1-4; Isa. 42:6). Because of their great relevancy to our eternal salvation, men ought to have a vital interest in utterances such as this, and the conditions involved in appropriating the blessed provisions which God, in Christ, has made for us.

Flesh and the carnal mind obscure these blessed realities from men's minds. But the gospel is a marvelous light which, when submitted to, shines with great luminosity into the darkness and depths of men's hearts. "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6).

The Context of the Heavenly Spokesman. It is in the context of the above considerations that the Holy Spirit declares that "God has spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1:2). Heaven has something to communicate to men that are upon earth that is mind-arresting and of the gravest consequences. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them," (Heb. 2:1, ASV) pleads the Apostle "in Christ's stead."

And then "the Word was made flesh," and the heavenly Spokesman came at long last!! No more would there need to be

veiled speeches about the God of heaven and the God of salvation! No more would there be such great need for parables to assist in comprehending the God of heaven. Such dark sayings are given primarily as a witness, both to and against, the insincere and the disinterested (Mt. 13:14-15).

In the enfleshment of Christ God could now be heard and understood by men with clarion voice. Jesus declared, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works" (Jn. 14:9-10). And again, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (Jn. 1:18).

Heeding the Heavenly Spokesman. The purpose for writing the Book of Hebrews was to impress upon the minds of some, who were drifting away from the faith, the greatness of the One who is speaking to them from Heaven now in "the end of the world." Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, is no longer God's suffering Servant, but He is rather His reigning Servant, reigning triumphant over all that would oppose Him, "till His enemies be made His footstool." And He is our great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens, and is now set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We have been saved, we are now being saved, but we shall yet be saved completely at the appearing of the Lord and Savior. Thus, while we are yet in the body we are in a perilous condition. For this cause it is essential for us to be in constant submission to, and communion with, the heavenly Spokesman, in order for the salvation to be realized and to avoid eternal disaster. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?" (Heb. 2:3).

The Apostle, in this first chapter, brings forth several strong arguments as to why the Son of God is worthy of our complete loyalty and submission. All of these references in chapter one to things spoken by Moses and the Prophets regarding Christ were made to convince men that the Savior, by the very nature of who He is, is worthy of nothing less than our unrevered obedience and uncompromising love and devotion.

Jesus Christ is Heir of all things, the brightness of the Father's glory, the express image of the Father's Person, the Upholder and Sustainer of all things, the great Sin-bearer, the One who now sits on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, the Creator of angels and of all things, and the One to whom the angels of God are subject, the Inheritor of a righteous throne and scepter, as well as the earth's foundation layer (see chapter 1:3-14).

These are not empty titles, as often is the case with men. But in each of them there are depths of riches of knowledge and blessedness to be earnestly explored and joyfully embraced by the godly. And each of these aspects of Christ's Person becomes a constrictor (to all who will consider) to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard.

In other words, the earth's foundation-layer is yet saying to us, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). And He that is seated in the throne of the Majesty in the heavens is declaring to all who will hear, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne" (Rev. 3:21). He that purged our sins is now calling out to men, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink" (Jn. 7:37).

So, in conclusion, let us consider the greatness of Him who now speaks from Heaven, and "draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:22).—*Editor*

Christ's High Priesthood

"Wherefore He [that is, Christ] is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

The matter of Christ's mediatorship is one which is rarely mentioned today in the religious media or from contemporary pulpits, and yet it is a vital reality, the lively comprehension of which enables men to continue in the faith and to continually draw near to God in spite of the sin which is in their members (Rom. 7:23), and which so easily besets them (cf. Heb. 12:1). Christ died for our sins on the cross, which most of fundamental Christendom acknowledges, but He has now also entered into the Holy Place (that is, Heaven itself) with "His own blood" (Heb. 9:12) for us!

The Letter to the Hebrews. It should be noted that Christ's High Priesthood was the primary subject of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews (cf. chap. 8:1), and it should be a main consideration for us as well. The efficacious knowledge of the mediatorship of the Savior would be the remedy and means of recovery from the Hebrews' perilous condition of lingering upon the first principles of the faith (cf. Heb. 5:12-6:8). And the comprehension, by faith, of this unseen reality would be the very thing that would effectually stir them up to their going on to perfection in Christ.

Our generation also is one that is desperately in need of heeding and digesting the message of the epistle to the Hebrews. We live in a day when the emphasis of most religious fundamentalism is centered in the realm of the seen, because it is this-world oriented. But by heeding and submitting to the admonitions contained in the Hebrew letter the religious men of our day could be enabled to make the necessary transition from the carnal to the spiritual, from the temporal to the eternal, and from the cursed ensconcement in this present evil world to that state of heart where affections are set on things above. It may be consistently noted that wherever the High Priesthood of Christ is not a vital consideration among men, there religious objectives and activities are this-world focused, and men's mindfulness of, and conversancy with, the world to come is woefully lacking. Christ's advocacy (cf. I Jn. 2:1-2) for men at the right hand of God is not regarded by such ones as being supremely important.

The Shortfall of Fundamentalism. In view of this situation, it is an alarming consideration that most of that which is called fundamentalism does not appear to perceive, in the least, the danger that is associated with *not* going on to perfection. There are literally multitudes of religious people who have made no significant advancement in the things of God since they made their profession of faith at the beginning. And for the most part, such ones seem to be unaware of the jeopardies that are part and parcel of not growing "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). (We have known individuals in the church who are still rehashing the same rudimentary things that they talked about thirty years ago. This situation is not, in the least, spiritually normal and it is a travesty upon the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ! We have been given to serve the risen and the living Christ!)

A Vestigial Doctrine. Where the High Priesthood of

Christ is acknowledged at all today, it is given mere lip service. It is considered to be more like what might be called a "vestigial" doctrine: that is, a teaching that has been obviously left over to us from the days of the Apostles, but for which the modern church has found no practical need or use. But we would like to give our considered judgment in this matter. The reason the church today does not regard as important Christ's High Priesthood is this: the Lord Jesus Christ is now passed into *the realm that is unseen* by mortal eyes as He is now set down at the right hand of God.

In our day, as we have indicated above, the majority of the church's leaders and constituents have become anchored in their heart's affection to *that which is seen and temporal*. Consequently, they have little or no interest in things that are not seen, and which are eternal (cf. II Cor. 4:18), and they are not making the necessary diligent preparation to enter into "that world" (Lk. 20:35). The proper comprehension of Christ's mediatorship is essential if men are to safely make the blessed transition from this world to the world to come (cf. Heb. 7:25; I Tim. 2:3-5; Heb. 9:11).

The Essentiality of Christ's Mediatorship. Christ's High Priesthood is essential to our eternal salvation and well being. As it is written, "Wherefore *He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them*" (Heb. 7:25). By way of contrast however, the church of our day is suffering from an oversimplistic view of the gospel. Many would acknowledge Christ's atoning work on the cross for the putting away of our sins as being absolutely necessary for our salvation, and this is good.

But typically, the church of the twentieth century is willfully ignorant of the jeopardies that are associated with living in this present world, which jeopardies make Christ's High Priesthood to be absolutely essential to our continuance in the faith (cf. Acts 14:22; Col. 1:23), and equally important, to our abundant entrance (cf. II Pet. 1:11) into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christ's death on the cross is often acknowledged by today's religious devotees as being His "finished work," but with such ones, the ongoing *work* of Christ's mediatorship at the right hand of God is generally not emphasized, demonstrating that it is not regarded by them as being important.

Let us, therefore, cast our hopes and our all upon Christ's ability as High Priest to save and sustain us! *He is able to save us to the uttermost*, as we come unto God by Him! And for those who come to God through our great High Priest He will have "compassion on the ignorant and on them which are out of the way" (Heb. 5:2). And as we have said, this is a demonstration of the love of God toward us, because God appointed Christ to be our great High Priest, and the blessed Mediator between God and men. In the very appointment of Christ as Priest (cf. Ps. 110:4) God was declaring unequivocally His earnest desire for His people to at last arrive safely in His Presence and to dwell with Him forevermore!—*Editor*

An Apostle's Earnest Beseechment. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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. 12:1-2). Paul, by the Holy Spirit, is literally begging the brethren there at Rome to present themselves wholly to God, to His service, and to His loving devotion. Let us, as well, quench not the Spirit, but let us present our bodies holiely to God's service. This is the only appropriate response to the things which

**There We shall have Eternal Life without
Encumbrance!**

The World to Come

*“For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection
the world to come, whereof we speak”
(Heb. 2:5).*

Our purpose here shall be to draw our attention and thoughts to the world to come. We ought to be conversant with this matter, for its lovely domain and environment shall soon burst upon us and we shall be there! We shall be there as rulers and as those who have power over the nations. (By faith we are tasting of the powers of the world to come now.) The world to come shall not be in subjection to angels, but rather to the people of the saints of the Most High God!

The world to come is the blessed domain where God is. There in that world men do not have to feel after Him to find Him, as is the case here (cf. Acts 17:27), for He Himself and the Lamb shall be perceptibly with us there. The tabernacle of God shall be with men. God is with us now to be sure (Emmanuel), and particularly so since the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (Jn. 1:14). But He is presently with us by faith, and faith has the ability to vacillate, sometimes being weak, and sometimes strong. And therefore the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen are presently perceived and known by men with varying degrees of clarity. According to our faith, so it is unto us (cf. Mt. 9:29)!

But there in the world to come the shadows and the variableness shall be forever past. When James spoke of the Father of lights having neither variableness or shadow of turning (Jas. 1:17), it seems that he was saying that there are, in fact, shadows and variableness in our understanding and perception of things that are not seen, depending on whether our faith is weak or strong. But with our heavenly Father there is neither shadow nor variableness, there is none at all! The present shadows and the variableness are all on our part, because we are yet in this world. In the world to come these things shall all be things of the past!

This World and the One to Come. “And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Mt. 12:32).

If men's sins are to be forgiven, they must be forgiven in this world. Sins that are not forgiven in this world shall in no wise be forgiven in the one that is to come. And the blasphemous sin that is mentioned here by the Savior shall be forgiven neither in this world nor in the one that is to come. (The blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, of course, involves the rejection of the glorified Christ.)

Neither in this world, neither in the world to come. There are two worlds and only two worlds that are to concern the people of God. There is the present evil world that has been cursed because of sin, and there is also the world to come, which is everlasting, and where nothing that defiles may enter (cf. Rev. 21:27). This present world is the place where sinful defilement occurs, and even where it abounds. And this world has as its prince that old serpent, which is called the Devil, and Satan (Jn. 12:31). “He is the liar, and the father of it” (Jn. 8:44). He is the deceiver and the slanderer. The Devil and prince of this world is the accuser of the brethren and a seducer. The prince of this

world knows well that he has but “a short time” (Rev. 12:12), however many of the children of this world are ignorant of this very thing.

Men must successfully navigate through this present world in order that they may obtain an eternal prize and enter into the world that is to come. This is done, of course, through obedience to the gospel and living by faith. Let every man and woman, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore devote himself and herself to the matter of safely arriving in that world!

We would here draw your attention to the way the Lord Jesus so candidly speaks of the world to come, even when confronting those who would oppose Him. Let us follow Him in this manner in our thoughts and conversation.

Eternal Life in the World to Come. “But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mk. 10:30).

We have eternal life now by faith, to be certain. As John declared, “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 Jn. 5:13). And again, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (Jn. 17:3). We who have obeyed the gospel know both the Father and the Son and have the firstfruits of eternal life now. But we do not presently have the fullness of it, not while we are yet in the vile body (Phil. 3:21). We presently taste of “the powers of the world to come” (Heb. 6:5), and we have been made for the resurrection body. As it is written, “He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing (the resurrection body) is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (II Cor. 5:5).

This world is the place where *the firstfruits of eternal life* is tasted and known. The world to come is the domain where *the fullness of eternal life* is had in complete possession by redeemed men. There in that world they cannot die, and none of the inhabitants say, I am sick (cf. Isa. 33:24). In the resurrection men live like they never lived before!

But right now we (that is, our bodies) are all in the process of dying. We shall all, however, soon put off our earthly tabernacles! It is good for us to consider that none of the inhabitants of that world are dying in any sense of the word! They are all *living* unto God through the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There in that world there are none that are faint or weary, and there are none with sinful or bodily infirmities.

God has written into the constitution of every man and woman the desire to live (cf. I Pet. 3:10). The answer to this desire is found in believing and obeying the gospel. It is in believing that we may “have *life through His Name*” (Jn. 20:31). And the ultimate answer to this desire shall be in the world to come, where we shall enter into the fullness of eternal life.

Incidentally, the fact that we now have eternal life and that we also are presently awaiting the fullness of that life completely destroys the argument of the so-called soul sleepers. When we put off this earthly tabernacle the eternal life that we presently have shall blossom forth into its long awaited consummation and fullness. We have eternal life!

The Association of Leaving with Receiving. “And He said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting” (Lk. 18:29-30).

We do not merit or earn eternal life by leaving these things,
(The World to Come, Continued on Page 10)

One Day Can Be Better!

By Given O. Blakely

*"A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand"
(cf. Ps. 84:10).*

It is possible for one day to outweigh all others—for the experiences of a single occasion to be of greater value than that of a thousand days. In fact, the Devil appeals to people with this principle in mind. He offers the "pleasure of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25), leading simple and unstable souls to believe they will be the better for the pleasure of a single transgression. Thus Eve was tempted to eat the forbidden fruit, thinking it would bring her great benefit. Achan coveted the forbidden wares of Jericho, thinking it brought him advantage. David summoned Bathsheba to his house when his fleshly lusts cried out for her. All of these, and more, found that Satan's lures yield only temporary satisfaction. The pleasures of sin are short-lived, indeed. They cannot carry over from one day to another.

There are, however, lofty experiences of soul that compensate for all of the hardships of life—times when the light is so bright the night cannot be remembered. These are times when one day—a single occasion—is better than a thousand days spend under the umbrella of delusion!

Being a man after God's own heart (I Sam. 13:14), we should expect David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel" (II Sam. 23:1) to know of such times. Hear the cry of this man of God as he hungered for one of those days—one of those times of spiritual refreshment and strength. "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary" (Ps. 63:1-2). O, such times are like a sweet elixir to the soul! To see the power and glory of God is like a refreshing tidal wave to the soul, cleansing, refreshing, and refurbishing its latent powers.

When one "tastes that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8), firm resolves begin to dominate the soul. David expressed it this way. "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4). He had realized such satisfaction, peace, and joy in the Presence of the Lord, he would spare no effort to "dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Hear the man of God as he testifies of the inexplicable beauty of God's dwelling place. "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!" (Ps. 84:1). Something that is "amiable" is well loved, or lovely. There is something satisfying and refreshing about being with the Lord—in His "tabernacles." This is the place where the Lord is evident. It is where the things of this world recede into the background.

It is no wonder that the psalmist had such a strong appetite for the Lord's "courts," where He is more apparent, and His blessings are more within our reach. How marvelously David says it. "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (Ps. 84:2).

One Day is Better Than a Thousand. That brings us to the text to which this devotion refers. It is a text that says one day can be better than a thousand days. It is possible for more benefit to be compressed into a single day than the world can pour

into a thousand days. "For a day in Thy courts IS BETTER than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10).

How glorious is the statement! More benefit, more joy, and more blessing can take place where God is dwelling than can be accumulated in a thousand days where He cannot be found! Legion is the name of those seeking pleasure and advantage in places where such things really do not exist. Such poor souls do not know that the world is like the "two daughters" of the "horseleach," which cry our incessantly, "GIVE, GIVE!" (Prov. 30:15), never giving in return.

Let me spend a single day in the "courts of the Lord!" Let me be more conscience of a sacrifice for sins, cleansing for the soul, and the fragrance of Divine goodpleasure," and I will gather strength to run the race set before me! Like Elijah, who ate a meal prepared by the angel of the Lord, I will be able "to go in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God" (I Kgs. 19:8). In every way, a day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand anywhere else!

Once such a day has been experienced, it will become apparent that being a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord is better than dwelling in the tents of wickedness! It is better to linger in the vestibule of Divine presence than to dwell in opulence alone!

O reader, may you experience that one day that is better than a thousand! May you know the benefit of being a keeper of the door that leads to blessing.—406 S. Sergeant St., Joplin, MO 64801

A THOUSAND TIMES MORE

By Given O. Blakely

*"May the LORD God of your fathers
make you a thousand times more numerous
than you are, and bless you as He has promised you!"
(Deut. 1:11, NKJV)*

The people of God had become so numerous, that they were to many for Moses "carry alone" (Deut. 1:9, NIV). The Israelites had grown remarkably from a mere seventy souls that went down into Egypt. As it is written, "All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy" (Gen 46:26, NKJV)—certainly an extremely small beginning. However, they certainly did not come out of Egypt a meager few—even though they were sorely oppressed. There were 600,000 men on foot (or mature men), besides children, and a "mixed multitude" (Exod. 12:37-38). Conservative estimates suggest from 3 to 4 million people came out in the midnight exodus. Now, Moses stands before the people and reminds them of what the Lord has done.

"The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude" (Deut. 1:10, NKJV). What a testimony they were to the greatness of God! But Moses is not content with what has been done to this point. Also, even though the people have grown to the place where he needs help, he desires for exponential growth among them. "May the LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you!" He knew the Lord's promise to Abraham was vast in scope. "Then He brought him (Abraham) outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'" (Gen. 15:5). You may recall that the patriarch's belief of this Divine commitment was what prompted God to account him righteous. "And

he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). A great promise deserves great faith.

You must not miss the spirit of Moses in this text. Even though the people had become a burden to him, he desired for them to increase. His desires were not small, but becoming of a man of faith. The belief of the promises of God had moved him away from the lowlands of carnal thought and mere self-interests. The increase he desires is unheard of in our time—"a thousand times." We hear of churches that have doubled, or tripled, of even increased fifteen or twenty times—but compare that with "a thousand times!"

The people were too many for Moses to judge and lead profitably, yet he desires they increase "a thousand times." He will instruct them on how to address the need for rulers over their tribes—but he desires that the Lord increase them "a thousand times." Moses knew the Lord had promised Abraham a multitude of posterity. He also knew the Lord was fully capable of doing this. He brought his thinking into harmony with the promises of God.

The prophets foretold of the triumph of truth and the enlargement of the people of God. Of our Savior's administration of salvation Isaiah said, "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end" (Isa. 9:7). In the second Psalm, the Spirit tells of a conversation between the Father and the Word, prior to Him being made flesh. "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession" (Ps. 2:8). John was granted to behold the vast multitude of the saved. The number of them extended beyond man's mathematical expertise. "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes . . ." (Rev. 7:9). There is nothing small about grace!

From the highest view, this enormous throng came from "one Man," Christ Jesus (Rom. 5:15). From the lower view, they came from Abraham, after he was "as good as dead." As it is written, "Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude; innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore" (Heb. 11:12). In both cases, even "a thousand times" comes far short of the results wrought by our God.

May the Lord deliver us from small thinking! May we seek blessings and increase that will bring great glory to God!—406 *S. Sergeant St., Joplin, MO 64801*

Coercion vs. Constraint. God not only *is* righteous (Dan. 9:14), but He also *loves* righteousness (Ps. 11:7). Therefore, in order for men to be transformed into the divine image, it is impossible for them to be coerced into this blessed conformity as some theologies would teach, (for the love for righteousness is not coercible)! Rather men must be constrained thereunto by means of the "exceeding great and precious promises" (II Pet. 1:4) which God has given us.—*Editor*

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When Suffering is Better

By Given O. Blakely

Faith, and the grace that brings it, has a sanctifying effect upon the soul. When we live by faith (and the just so live by faith, Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38), the whole of life is changed. Even the bitter dregs of suffering are turned to our advantage. Afflictions, or troubles, are lightened, and perceived as but for a moment. They become our employees, working for us a glory that outweighs them all. As it is written, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (II Cor. 4:17). That is the exclusive perspective of faith.

This brings us to a text worthy of our consideration. We must occupy lofty realms in order to take hold of the truth here declared. "For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing" (I Pet. 3:17).

When believers are faced with suffering, they must ever remember, "it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil." There is no virtue in suffering for wrong doing. The world says, "I will take it if I have it coming." But faith says, "I will rejoice that I have been counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (Acts 5:41).

Jesus said, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Mt. 5:11-12). You must have a faith that can receive that truth!

Even when we suffer for righteousness sake, or for well doing, our suffering is seen as an "IF." Our enemies do not have control of us. They are not able to do what they will whenever they want. Even the Devil cannot test or sift us without getting permission from God Almighty (Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6). Even then, for those in Jesus Christ, He intercedes for them, praying their faith will not fail when they are sorely tested (Lk. 22:31-32). If we suffer, it is according "to the will of God." Israel had to cross the Red Sea, go through the wilderness, and cross the Jordan River at flood tide, in order to enter Canaan!

God has noble purposes that are served in our sufferings. Many times, such suffering is in order that you "may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer" (II Th. 1:5). Such suffering has a way of stripping from us the things that cannot transfer to the world to come.

Suffering unjustly is not by chance! When we do well, living by faith and in a good conscience, and affliction results from it, the working of God is being made known to us. He is showing us the conflict between this world and the one of which we are citizens. The suffering can endear heaven to us, and remove us even farther from the cursed order.

In such suffering, we are being better suited for the glory that awaits us. We are also being loosed from the hold of this world. There is also a richness of fellowship in suffering for doing good, that cannot be realized any other way. This is called "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10), and is worth the forfeiture of all fleshly advantages. That is what makes suffering for doing good "better" than suffering "for doing evil."

The marvelous truth unveiled in this text will be best understood in contemplation and meditation. It is not something that can be learned like a mathematical table or a mechanical routine. The richness of its truth will be unfolded as you muse upon it. In your musing, the Lord will correlate what He has declared with what you have experienced.—406 *S. Sergeant St., Joplin, MO 64801*

The Consummative Ability of God

By Fred O. Blakely

Calculative forethought is enjoined by the Lord Jesus upon those who would be identified with Him. His demands are absolute and all-encompassing, with the result that, as viewed from the fleshly standpoint, it is an exceedingly hard life to which He beckons. Indeed, He Himself declared, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mt. 7:13-14). Again, He asserted, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk. 9:22-26). And, again, "If any man come unto Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14:26). And, yet again, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple" (v. 27).

To be joined to Jesus in His resurrection, one must be united with Him in His death to sin and the world. This is what the Savior meant by the necessity of one bearing his own cross if he were to follow Him. Such spiritual crucifixion, of course, involves the renunciation of the world by the believer and the world's rejection of him, as Paul explains (Gal. 6:14-16). Obviously, this is an unprecedented demand upon the allegiance of man. No half-heartedness or *happy-mediumness* is tolerated by the Lord of glory in His exactions. Like the early disciples, one must leave all to follow him. Otherwise, his company will not be accepted by the Savior, but will be repulsed in utter revulsion (Rev. 3:15-16).

The Admonition to Count the Cost. Fully cognizant of the tendency that many would have to underestimate the austerity of His demands, our Lord accompanied His call to discipleship with a stern admonition. He urged His hearers to soberly count the cost of their commitment before they made it. "Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost?" He asked, "whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, but was not able to finish" (Lk. 14:28-33).

Back of this demand for previous calculation is the Savior's recognition of the shame and tragedy of subsequent dereliction, or falling short of God's high calling in Himself. "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back," He asserted, "is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). Going even further, the Lord declared of one who had begun, "but was unable to finish," "The last state of that man is worse than the first" (Mt. 12:43-45). Peter echoed this awesome truth, asserting, "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (II Pet. 2:20-22).

For the purpose of encouraging and sustaining our hearts in the good fight of faith, it is right and necessary that we seek and obtain the "full assurance of faith," which ministers certainty of our eternal salvation in Christ (Heb. 10:22). But it is a great perversion of such assurance, and an effective snare of the Devil, to come to think that we have at any point in this life passed beyond the possibility of falling away. Such an attitude fosters neglect of that spiritual diligence which is everywhere in Scripture imposed upon those who would apprehend that for

which they have been apprehended by Christ (Phil. 3:12). It takes for granted the very point which is currently in the process of demonstration in the trial of our faith, namely, that of our calling and election by God. The possibility of our being unable to finish the "tower" which we began to build in our initial response to Christ should serve as a continual goad to our watchfulness, prayer, and steadfast cleaving to Him, who alone is able to cause us to complete it according to plan.

God, the Builder of the Tower of Salvation. In the very midst of our thus striving to "enter in at the strait gate" (Lk. 13:23-30), however, there is another view of the situation which will undergird our hearts and buoy up our spirits. It is that of God Himself as the "wise Masterbuilder" of the "tower," or house, of salvation through Jesus His Son (I Cor. 3:10). This certainly is no strange concept, since Scripture declares that it is He that "built all things" (Heb. 3:4). In the same connection, it is declared that we believers are the house of Christ, "if we hold fast the beginning of the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6; cf. vv. 12-14). Elsewhere the church is set forth as "the house of God" (I Tim. 3:15), or "the temple of God" (I Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22), which His righteous Servant—the Lord Jesus—was Himself to build (Zech. 6:12-13; Mt. 16:18).

Now, since God is the Archetype—Pattern or Model—by which redeemed man is to be fashioned, it follows that what is required of man will be exemplified by God. As a matter of fact, a careful study of Scripture will disclose that this is precisely the state of the case—God demands nothing of us which He is not, or has not done, repentance only being excepted. Thus, the culmination of the great salvation in the saints is denoted as a complete conformity to the Image of Christ, who, of course, is the "express" likeness of the Father (Heb. 1:3). This being the situation, we should expect God to set the example in His demand for calculative forethought by us. That is to say, if He requires that we count the cost before accepting His beloved Son—lest we be unable to follow through in discharge of the obligations entailed by our acceptance—surely He did so before launching the redemptive enterprise.

The Full Calculation of the Father. This assumption requires that God should have foreseen all possible obstacles to the consummation of His eternal purpose in Christ to save the world. Not only His own unutterably great suffering in the sacrifice of His dear Son, but every other difficulty which Satan would contrive to frustrate the divine plan, until the last pre-terminated saint was brought safely home to glory, must have been taken into consideration, and adequate provision made to overcome it. Had the Father done less than this, He would have fallen short of the responsibility which He enjoined upon His people to count the cost.

Moreover, in that shortcoming, He would have left Himself wide open to the mocking of Satan, which assuredly would have been promptly forthcoming in the event of God's frustration. One can all but hear the accuser, in such a situation, hurling his taunt before the divine throne, in the presence of the holy angels and all the other heavenly intelligences: "Behold, He began to build, and was not able to finish!" If the failure of the creature to attain the goal sought in Christ because of inadequate forethought be attended by shame, what could be said of the reproach to the God of Heaven, under such circumstances affecting Himself! Obviously, it would amount to His deposition as God, seeing that Satan would have foiled His plan in Christ to save.

But—bless His Name!—such a thing will never occur. God fully counted the cost in old eternity, ere time began. "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world"

(Acts 15:18). In His immutable and unthwartable purpose, they were all "finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:3). "Every purpose of the Lord shall be performed" (Jer. 51:29). "My counsel shall stand," He declared, "and I will do all My pleasure" (Isa. 46:9-10). His divine wisdom and power assure this, there being none to effectually challenge or frustrate His undertaking in Christ. What God has designed and promised in the Beloved, He is well able to perform. In the divine plan of salvation there were no oversights. All the factors touching the case were duly considered, and the plan was drafted and inaugurated in full recognition of them, with every provision made in advance to fully cope with all obstacles to its grand consummation.

The Right Application of This Certainty. As we have said, on the individual level we are not to become carnally *cocksure* of our salvation. But of this one thing we may be unshakably confident—God's house will be built according to plan and schedule. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this" (Isa. 9:7). Satan and his evil hosts, it is true, "shall make war with the Lamb." It is written, however, "The Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).

The important consideration for us is to make certain that we are in Christ and He in us, and that we keep ourselves in this blessed relationship by cleaving to Him. God will unfaillingly finish what He began in His Son. It is our responsibility to give diligence to "be found in Him" both now and at the great day of His appearing (Phil. 3:8-9). So shall we finish our course with joy, and enter forever into the glory of the Lord.

"The flower of youth never appears more beautiful than when it bends toward the Sun of Righteousness."—*Matthew Henry*

(The World to Come, Continued from Page 6)

but yet there is a definite connection between leaving these things and receiving everlasting life. By leaving these lesser things we are declaring our preference for the eternal things. And by leaving these things, even if only in our heart's affection, we are making room in that affection for the things which are everlasting. Those individuals, who despise and leave the lesser things of this present world, are the ones who shall be accounted worthy to enter into and take possession of the eternal things in the world to come. And they are the only ones! Make no mistake about it! Let us give diligence to make our calling and election sure!

And let us ask ourselves as well, what have we left in this world that we may obtain eternal life? The babylonish church speaks mostly of the first fruits of eternal life that is had in this world, if it speaks of this subject at all. And it is true that we presently *have* eternal life. But let us learn to associate the fullness of eternal life with the world to come and to speak frequently of it! As we have said, presently we have a little fore-sampling of eternal life by faith. But there in the world to come we shall bask and glory in, and take complete possession of the fullness of that eternal life while eternity rolls her ceaseless cycles on!

Worthiness and the World to Come. "And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage" (Lk. 20:34-35).

The world to come shall be the blessed and eternal residence of worthy ones. The matter of worthiness points to the unspeakable blessedness and greatness of the world that is to

come. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Let us continually pray that we may be among those who are accounted worthy to obtain that world. This is to be the stance of the people of God in the present time, namely that of waiting and earnestly expecting. If obtaining that world is the foremost desire of the heart, then this becomes an evidence and confirmation to men that they have, in fact, been accounted worthy in this sense, and that they shall obtain the promised blessedness that is soon to come.

Accounted Worthy to Obtain That World. This is a classic statement of substance, certainty, and objectivity. It demonstrates that the Lord Jesus Christ, even in the days of His flesh, continually had the world to come firmly in mind. And He is the example to us in this matter. Let us also seek to have the same steadfast conviction and persuasion about "that world." There is nothing ethereal or hazy about the things which are not seen, and which are eternal. The subject is only hazy to men who are not walking by faith. Let us also follow the Lord Jesus Christ in this constant spiritual awareness of the world to come and speak with the same objectivity. Let us walk in the Spirit!

The Resurrection of Life. "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which 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" (Jn. 5:28-29).

Graves are temporary resting places for bodies, not for spirits! Personalities are definitely associated with the bodies which were layed in the graves, but the spirits of these personalities did not die; they simply went to another place of abode. And the resurrection, from this perspective, contemplates the raising of those bodies and the reuniting of them with the spirits. They were sown in weakness, but they shall be raised in power. They were sown in corruption, but they shall be raised in incorruption. They were sown a natural body, but they shall raised a spiritual body.

Those who come forth unto the resurrection of life are the ones who shall enter into that world. And those who come forth unto the resurrection of damnation shall be cast into the lake of fire. They shall not be annihilated, as is commonly taught today!

The Blessed Continuing City. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). The world to come will be a continuing city. The inhabitants that are there shall not die, and fall out from among the number, any more. Presently the members of our race, and even of the household of faith, are departing from us right and left, because of the edenic death sentence. Here we do not have the continuing city, *but we seek one to come!* It is not spiritually natural for us to be separated from our brethren and from our loved ones by death. The quest for a continuing city is written in our constitution. The very desire for the resumption and continuance of spiritual relationships and associations that death has severed can become a confirmation to us that those blessed associations shall, in fact, be resumed in the world to come. And we praise God that the continuing city is coming! It is coming in the ages to come. When Christ shall come again, He will bring with Him those whom death had taken away (cf. I Th. 4:14)!

The New Heavens and Earth. "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

The promises constrain us to look to the world to come. It is certain that there is nothing here in this world that would

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Its Preservative Quality. This identifying and preserving characteristic of grief over sin, which marks one as eligible for the divine seal, has repeated demonstration in Scripture. It is written of "just Lot" that he "vexed his righteous soul from day to day" with the "filthy conversation" and "unlawful deeds" of the wicked Sodomites (II Pet. 2:6-8). Hence, when God was ready to wreak His vengeance upon "the cities of the plain," He remembered and delivered him. "Haste thee, escape thither," urged the destroying angel in reference to Zoar; "for I cannot do anything till thou be come thither" (Gen. 19:22, 29).

Similarly, on the night of the terrible slaughter of Egypt's firstborns, God restrained Himself. "When I see the blood," He assured His people, alluding to the blood of the Passover lamb which they had been commanded to sprinkle around the entrance-ways to their homes, "I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you" (Exod. 12:12-13).

Historians tell us that in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, God's mercy to His saints was likewise exhibited. Ere the city fell to Titus and his besieging legions, there was a strange and unaccounted-for withdrawal from the environs. During this time, the Christians all escaped to Pella, a town in Perea, after which the Romans sealed the city, and none was allowed to leave it. Meanwhile, however, all of Christ's brethren, pursuant to His instructions given some forty years previously (Matt. 24:15-22), had fully escaped that divine judgment against the holy city. In like manner, as the text of Rev. 7:1-3 indicates, at the last great judgment-day, when the angels of wrath see the seal of the living God in the foreheads of His approved ones, they will pass over them, sparing them "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Mal. 3:17):

Its Comfort and Exhortation for Us. In the midst of the world's unbelief and sin, it is blessed, indeed, to know that God's gracious eye is on every genuine servant of His. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (II Tim. 2:19). Every one who "sighs and cries over the abominations of Jerusalem" is fully recognized by Him, for this is the Spirit of His Son groaning through them. And on all who bear the mark of this divine knowledge and approval, the amnesty and protection of God shall rest.

This is the fact of the present, as it has been the experience of the past. It is the certain prospect of the future. Let us who have this witness within ourselves, then, not be prevailed upon to surrender it by the ridicule of those who are at ease in today's Zion. To repress our opposition to evil is to resist and quench the Spirit. Let us recognize this, rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer with Christ, and continue unrelentingly the good fight of faith.—*Originally appeared under the title, "The*

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make us want to stay. This is not our rest, it is polluted (cf. Mic. 2:10). Let us therefore set our affection on things that are above, and join the grand company of those who are looking for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness!

Let us rejoice that, in the new heavens, the prince of the power of the air shall be no longer there. And "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" shall be forever banished from the new earth. There shall be neither "root nor branch" (Mal. 4:1) of ungodliness, nor wickedness in that world.

Righteousness, and particularly the love of righteousness, shall be a preeminent and all-pervasive characteristic of the world to come. It shall characterize both the domain and as well the redeemed personalities who are accounted worthy to enter there. If you love righteousness now, that consideration will have a strong appeal to you.—*Editor*

**Motel Information for
Refreshing Waters Renewal
August 1-3, 2000**

In St. James, Missouri

**Comfort Inn, 110 N. Outer Rd.
573-265-5005**

**Economy Inn, 102 N. Outer Rd.
573-265-3256**

In Rolla, Missouri

**Best Western Inn, 1403 Martin Springs Dr.
573-341-2511**

**Days Inn, 1207 Kingshighway St.
573-341-3700**

**Drury Inn, 2006 N. Bishop Ave.
573-364-4000**

**Econo Lodge, 1417 Martin Springs Dr.
573-341-3130**

**Holiday Inn, 1507 Martin Springs Dr.
573-364-8200**

**Howard Johnson, 144 Bus Route 44
573-364-7111**

**Ramada Inn, 1701 Martin Springs Dr.
573-364-7977**

**Super 8 Motel, 1201 Kingshighway St.
573-364-4156**

**Wayfarer Inn, 1505 Martin Springs Dr.
573-364-3333**

Postmaster: Send Address Changes to:

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**August 1 through 3, St. James, Missouri
(Please note change in
Location!!!)**

—Refreshing Waters Renewal— Heavenly Mindedness

The 12th annual **Refreshing Waters Renewal** is to be held at **Solid Rock Christian Church** in **St. James, Missouri** this summer. Craig Rippy is the minister at the assembly there. (St. James is a little **east of Rolla near Interstate 44**. Please note that the location for the Renewal was recently changed to St. James from De Soto.)

The theme of the Renewal this year is *Heavenly Mindedness*. The dates for these gatherings are set for August 1 through 3, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of that week. The following are a listing of topics to be dealt with either in sermon or discussion form.

- "Speaking of Heavenly Things" (Jn. 3:12)
- "Spiritual Blessings in Heavenly Places" (Eph. 1:3)
- "Jesus is Seated in Heavenly Places" (Eph. 1:20)
- "Raised Up to Sit with Christ in Heavenly Places"
(Eph. 2:6)
- "God's Wisdom is Being Made Known to Principalities
and Powers in Heavenly Places" (Eph. 3:10)
- "Partakers of the Heavenly Calling" (Heb. 3:1)
- "Tasting of the Heavenly Gift" (Heb. 6:4)
- "The Tabernacle: An Example and Pattern of
Heavenly Things" (Heb. 8:5)
- "Desiring a Heavenly Country" (Heb. 11:16)
- "We have Come to The Heavenly Jerusalem"
(Heb. 12:22)
- "We have a Better and Enduring Substance in
Heaven" (Heb. 10:34)
- "The Inheritance Reserved in Heaven" (I Pet. 1:4)
- "There are Three that Bear Record in Heaven"
(I Jn. 5:7)
- "Rejoicing that Our Names are Written in Heaven"
(Lk. 10:20; Heb. 12:23)
- "Refusing not Him that Speaks from Heaven"
(Heb. 12:25)
- "Waiting for God's Son from Heaven" (I Th. 1:10)
- "The Resurrection Body: Our House from Heaven"
(II Cor. 5:2)

We are looking forward to another outstanding time of strengthening at the meetings planned for this year! For more information, you may contact Michael Blakely. His address is: 4437 Chatham Drive, Brownsburg, IN 46112-8513.

Miscellaneous Observations and Reflections

There are decisions that we make which will determine our eternal destiny.—*Terry Wellsand*

There is both caution and promise to be found in God's Word.—*Michael Lohrman*

The Ten Commandments are the beginning of God's expectations of us.—*Michael Lohrman*

God listens to the prayer of a righteous man with a kingdom-building purpose.—*Michael Lohrman*

"A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand" (cf. Ps. 84:10). "It is possible for more benefit to be compressed into a single day than the world can pour into a thousand days."—*Given O. Blakely*

Christ, Our Passover. When instituting the Lord's supper, Jesus didn't say to His disciples, "Let's celebrate the passover," but rather, "Do this in remembrance of Me." The centuries-old, annual observance of the passover was all along pointing to, and had reached its climax in, the offering up of Christ for us all. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" (I Cor. 5:7).—*David Maddack*

Giving and Loving. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn. 3:16). We see here two noteworthy action words: loving and giving. As "imitators of God" (Eph. 5:1, NASB), we, too, are called upon to love and give. Giving flows out of loving, and giving comes much easier where there is love.—*From a Communion meditation by Tom Dimos*

Local Contact for Refreshing Waters Renewal. If any desire to contact Craig Rippy, minister at *Solid Rock Christian Church* in St. James, Missouri, regarding the *Refreshing Waters Renewal*, the telephone numbers are as follows: 573-265-5003 (office); 573-265-3793 (home). The Renewal is to be held there August 1-3 of this year. The subject under consideration throughout the three day gathering will be *Heavenly Mindedness*.—*Editor*

Is He a Sanctuary or a Snare? "Sanctify the LORD of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Isa. 8:13-14). If men do not find the Lord God to be this "sanctuary" spoken of here by their continually drawing near to Him and implicitly trusting in Him, He will instead be found by such ones to be a rock which offends them, and over which they shall stumble in life, and a trap that shall ensnare them.—*David Maddack*