

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)

Volume 36

June 1998

Number 5

The Good Warfare Against Sin Betokens Sonship

The Witness of the Inner Conflict

By Fred O. Blakely

Psychologists, in the restriction of their unenlightened perception, have much to say of inner conflicts and the means of their resolution. As would be expected from such benighted sources, they completely miss the spiritual import for the Lord's people inherent in these struggles. It logically follows that the worldly-wise ones also come up with wholly inefficacious remedies for the spiritual ills which they probe and seek to treat. Psychological diagnosis, as commonly practiced, is thus fundamentally and crucially deficient. How can the maladjustments of a heavenly and an earthly nature be effectively dealt with by such persons? They themselves know not God, and are totally unaware, first, of the actual nature of the conflict, and, second, of the alchemy of Divine grace, which alone can avail as the desired counteractant. It would be very well, indeed, for believers, who seem to be increasingly captivated by these atheistic practitioners, to carefully ponder these considerations.

God's View of the Inner Struggle

Meanwhile, it is refreshing and edifying to take a look at God's appraisal of that strife which is inevitably engendered by His Spirit. While His grace is held forth to the combatants in the fray as altogether sufficient for their needs (II Cor. 12:9), an overall view of the situation is revealed which contrasts sharply with that of unbelieving psychologists and psychoanalysts. Here is conflict, it appears, with blessing attached, and in nature such as to confirm the faith of God's elect. So does the Lord, characteristically, bring good out of evil, and make even man's corruption and wrath to praise Him (Ps. 76:10; Prov. 16:7). All flesh, we are reminded, is in and under His mighty hand (Jn. 17:2; Eph. 1:19-23), and He diverts the impulses and resistance thereof "whithersoever He will" (Prov. 21:1). All praise to our God for such a Savior as He!

Its Testimony of our Sonship. The Lord's analysis of the "good warfare" against sin (I Tim. 1:18) experienced by His children (Rom. 7:23) presents itself as a vital witness of their status as such. The Scriptures in no wise ignore or deny the reality of the wrestling with evil which believers in Christ continually wage. Rather, they freely recognize it, and counsel concerning its prosecution unto victory. The facts that the contest is under way, and that the individual experiences distress in his involvement in it, are cited as evidence per se that he is verily accepted of God, and so is eligible for all the Divine blessing and succor which that happy circumstance entails. Such anguish, in fact, is depicted in the Word as fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings--the bearing of one's own cross, as charged by the Lord--and so is of the very highest order among the privileges and responsibilities of Christian discipleship. Thus, we have Peter's echo of that remarkable beatitude of our Lord: "If ye suffer for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye" (I Pet. 3:11-17, AV, ASV; cf. ch. 4:12-14; Mt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3-5; II Cor. 12:7-10; Jas. 1:2-4).

The peculiar attestation of union with Christ afforded by the clash with sin is specifically adduced by Peter in his first epistle (4:1-2). "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind," we are exhorted; "for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that ye no longer should live the rest of your

time in flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God" (ASV). The expression, "hath ceased from sin," refers to us who have believed, and not to Christ; clearly, it could not apply to "Him who knew no sin" (II Cor. 5:21). Paul's parallel of the sense intended by Peter occurs in Romans 6:7: "He that is dead is freed from sin." The idea is that the suffering occasioned by the lust of the flesh against the Spirit, and vice versa (Gal. 5:17), and the freedom from heart thralldom to sin thereby betokened, plainly manifest that the individual has "passed from death unto life" in Christ (I Jn. 3:14), and is partaking, in measure, of the glory that attends His death and resurrection (cf. Rom. 6:1-11).

The Nature of the Striving against Sin

It is important that the nature, as well as the fact, of the inner conflict into which one is plunged by his birth from Above be discerned. Many, unaware of the normalcy of the situation, "think it strange" concerning the "fiery trial" to which they are thus subjected (I Pet. 4:12; cf. I Cor. 10:13), and begin to even question the validity of their relationship to God as dear children. Others fall easy prey to Satan's devices simply because they do not comprehend the actual state of their regeneracy, and so are easily caught off guard. In coming to Christ, one does not actually die to sin, in the sense that he is totally and irrevocably separated from the fleshly nature and its lusts, although Scripture uses the word "death" to denote the change effected. More strictly, it may be said that it is in holy intent and resolve, under constraint of God's Spirit, that the mortification of the carnal man is achieved at conversion; that is, it is a spiritual death. As a matter of stark reality, the Adamic nature is still very much alive and ready to spring again into dominance of the life. Paul so represents the circumstance in Romans 6:11 when he exhorts, "Even so reckon, [or consider] ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus." In resurrection to newness of life in the Savior, one has, as it were, but openly declared war on his "old man" of sin (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10). It remains for him to spend the rest of his time in the flesh seeking grace by which to implement the decree against sin purposed in his heart and portrayed in the act of baptism into the Lord.

The Witness of the Conflict. It is in this lifelong experience of reckoning oneself dead to sin, of "striving against sin" (Heb. 12:4), of buffeting the mind and body to bring them into subjection to Christ (I Cor. 9:24-27; II Cor. 10:3-5), and of dying daily with Jesus (I Cor. 15:31) that the suffering in the flesh to which Peter refers (see I Pet. 4:1) is encountered. To subjugate the flesh to the Holy Spirit is to suffer (Heb. 2:18; 9-14). "To take our natural desires and passions and nail them to the cross is crucifixion--a slow, lingering death, which involves unutterable pain" (cf. II Cor. 4:10-12). But the very presence of the conflict, and its attendant misery, demonstrates that the believer is keeping covenant with the Savior in considering himself to be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11).

The feel of resistance by the water assures the oarsman that his craft is under way. And the press of opposition against the spirit of the saint attests his affinity with Him whom the world hates, and whose Nature and ways are directly counter to it. His suffering because of "conscience towards God" (I Pet. 2:19) thus becomes surety to the believer that he has "ceased from sin"; that is, that in his heart sin has become effectively outlawed and the issue with it practically joined. In the consciousness of this conflict, we should rejoice rather than despond, for herein we have certification of our kinship with God: our "calling and election" of Him is thus

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THE BANNER OF TRUTH

(ISSN 1089024)

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Published Monthly by the Independence Hill Christian Church
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Requested donation to pay for actual cost of publication, \$7.50 per year

Sent Free for Three Months upon Request

Periodicals, Gary, IN 464

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The Bringing in of a Better Hope

"For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Heb. 7:19). In these words of the Apostle we see vividly contrasted some of the experiential involvements of the new covenant with those of the old. In both the taking away of the first covenant *and* the establishment of the new (cf. Heb. 10:9) there is a gloriously *perceptible change* that has been wrought in the behalf of God's people: a change which ought to greatly delight any and all who are serious about serving the living God and abiding with Him forever. It is a change which provides cleansing for the conscience of all who are living by faith, and which imparts to them *a living hope* (I Pet. 1:3, RSV), a hope that reaches far beyond the pale of this mortal life.

In the new covenant believing men and women presently partake of and enjoy the first fruits of Heaven (cf. Heb. 6:4-5). Such ones "know that the Son of God is come, and hath given" them "an understanding" (I Jn. 5:20). *By faith* they know and are persuaded that their sins have, in fact, been taken away by Christ's blood. They are assured that they are justified by faith, have peace with God, and are made accepted in Christ, the Beloved One (Eph. 1:6). Because of this "better covenant" (Heb. 8:6), they delight in continually drawing near unto God now, greatly anticipat-

ing the time of their induction into His Presence forevermore at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Law Made Nothing Perfect. The perfection spoken of here appears to be that pertaining to the conscience, as is clearly the case elsewhere in the book of Hebrews (9:9; 10:1-4). The law was given "that every mouth" might "be stopped, and all the world" "become guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19), and by it came "the knowledge of sin" (v. 20). "Sin", which "is the transgression of the law" (I Jn. 3:4), makes men to *be completely unacceptable* in the sight of God and unfit for dwelling in His Presence. And the law faithfully witnesses against men when they sin.

But in addition to this, sin also defiles the conscience of men, so that, apart from its cleansing (Heb. 9:14), this inward self-monitor (the conscience) also testifies against men, causing them to judge *within themselves* that they are unfit for being in God's Presence. And though "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12), it cannot make men perfect as pertaining to the conscience.

In contrast with the law's failure to accomplish the above-mentioned perfection in the ones keeping it, the Apostle does not say, "*the bringing in of a new testament law* was the solution to man's dilemma," or "the bringing in of a set of "new testament commandments" did achieve that perfection which the commandments and laws of the first covenant could not achieve." But this is precisely the view that is taken today, almost universally in that which calls itself the church, and particularly in the various segments of the Campbell-Stone movement. "New testament law" and "new testament commandments", when the keeping of them is imposed upon men as the means of acceptance with God, will surely defile the conscience and bring the knowledge of sin, just as the first covenant did.

The Bringing in of a Better Hope. The new covenant is a better covenant as it not only affords an abundant provision for the remission of sins, making men unquestionably fit for the Presence of God, but also because in this covenant a copious provision has been made for the cleansing of the conscience by the blood of Christ. For this cause, those that are in Christ Jesus are accepted of God, and their conscience agrees with this acceptance. Their sins have been taken away by the Lamb of God, and their conscience gratefully attests that this is so.

The new covenant is also one which orients men for entrance into the world to come and causes them to greatly anticipate dwelling forever in the Presence of God. Men and women who are in this covenant now have their affection set "on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). Such ones are presently desiring "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. 11:16). These individuals, "according to" God's "promise," are looking "for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (II Pet. 3:13).

But, alas, few and far between are the religious groups on the current religious scene where the constituents are spiritually conversant with *the new covenant*: enough so to *personally* delight and rejoice in it, and to joyfully sound forth to fellow men its glorious virtues and benefits! And it would be very rare to find individuals who, as a matter of course, think of the new covenant in terms of "the bringing in of a better hope." But that is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying here in verse 19. The setting in place, or the implementation, of the new covenant in the stead of "the first testament" (Heb. 9:18) is expressed here by the words "the bringing in of a better hope." Let us give thanks for the better covenant which God has provided. --*Editor*

On the Fear of Death

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Rev. 2:11).

The first death we must endure unless the Lord should suddenly come to His temple. For this let us abide in readiness, awaiting it without fear, since Jesus has transformed death from a dreary cavern into a passage leading to glory.

The thing to be feared is not the first, but the second death; not the parting of the soul from the body, but the final separation of the entire man from God. This is death indeed. This death kills all peace, joy, happiness, hope. When God is gone all is gone. Such a death is far worse than ceasing to be: it is existence without the life which makes existence worth the having.

Now, if by God’s grace we fight on to the end, and conquer in the glorious war, no second death can lay its chill finger upon us. We shall have no fear of death and hell, for we shall receive a crown of life which fadeth not away. How this nerves us for the fight! Eternal life is worth a life’s battle. To escape the hurt of the second death is a thing worth struggling for throughout a lifetime.

Lord, give us faith, so that we may overcome, and then grant us grace to remain unharmed though sin and Satan dog our heels! --*Charles H. Spurgeon, The Sage Digital Library*

A Disannulling of the Commandment. “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof” (Heb. 7:18). “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12). But as a means of bringing men near unto, and finding acceptance with, the Holy One, the law is “weak through the flesh” (Rom. 8:3). Therefore, coming to God on the basis of law-keeping has been disannulled or made void. *It counts for nothing!*

We ought to give thanks that there is now “a disannulling of the commandment” as the way to obtaining righteousness and favor with the living God. Law, as a means of obtaining salvation, *counts for zero*, and, for the accomplishment of such purpose, it is equated with weakness and unprofitability. Incidentally, what men today call “new testament law” is equally *weak and unprofitable* as a means of reconciling people to God. When imposed upon men as a condition of salvation, it will have precisely *the same conscience-defiling effect* that the law of Moses was designed to have, except with greater intensity.

Let us, therefore, diligently lay aside every semblance of a law-approach to God, as *the commandment has now been disannulled*. Obeying the gospel, believing the gospel, continuing in the faith, *count for everything* in the obtaining of “the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (II Tim. 2:10).

The Last Twenty-Seven Books. The last 27 books of the Bible, commonly called *The New Testament*, would be more properly termed *The Apostles’ Writings*. Much confusion prevails in the church and throughout the world on this point because men have equated Matthew through Revelation with such things as “the new testament” and “the new covenant.” The *new testament* and *new covenant* are *one and the same*, and they have reference to the covenant of which Jeremiah prophesied (Jer. 31:31-34). It remained for the Apostles to proclaim and enlarge upon the nature and conditions of this “better covenant” (Heb. 8:6). Their writings are not, however, to be equated with the new covenant, although their words are continually pointing to and expounding the nature and the involvements of that covenant. --*Editor*

“The way people serve God reveals their view of what He is like.” -
--*Timothy McCulfor*

Jesus is not so sick of our sin as He is of our lukewarmness (cf. Rev. 3:16). --*Charles H. Spurgeon*

“Holy living is the result of access to God and not the condition for it.” --*Timothy McCulfor*

When the stone of affliction strikes the flinty rock of faith, sparks of hope are generated which can inflame the soul.

The essence of Heaven is the absolute compatibility between redeemed persons and the new and eternal order. --*Fred O. Blakely*

God will not permit His purpose to be executed by man’s wisdom and ingenuity. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to” God “be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36). And we praise God that He works in this manner!

A Wonderful Answer. “The one who would seek God is not left to wander in the dark. He has but to look in the pages of Scripture for the revelation. The answer to the question, “What is God like?”, is found there and it is an unexpectedly wonderful answer.” --*Timothy McCulfor*

Strength in Apparent Weakness. For the believer in Christ, his or her strongest moments oftentimes are those in which weakness is most felt and apparent. As it was with the Savior, so also it is with all those who are in Him: “For though He (Christ) was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you” (II Cor. 13:4).

Regarding the Scriptures. “Born in the East and clothed in Oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. It comes into the palace to tell the monarch that he is a servant of the Most High, and into the cottage to assure the peasant that he is a son of God. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of life.” --*Henry Van Dyke*

Divine Testing Compared to Temptation. In James chapter 1:2-4, 12-16 we see the souls of believing men and women being pulled in two entirely different directions and confronted by two completely different kinds of distractions. On the one hand their faith is being proven and tried by the God of Heaven, even as Abraham’s faith was sorely tested (Gen. 22:1). But in stark contrast with this, they also often find themselves being drawn away and enticed from the living God by their own sinful lusts.

In the first instance God is summoning men to give the more earnest heed to what He is saying in His Word, especially when there is a conflict between what *appears* to be true, and what saith the Scripture (cf. Rom 4:3; Gal. 4:30). In the second instance we see the Tempter (Mt. 4:3) busily at work with his arsenal of subtle devices (II Cor. 2:11), seeking to seduce men away from the God of their salvation. --*Editor*

What is God Like?

By Timothy McCulfor

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

What is God Like? Once a man recognizes the existence of God, whether through the testimony of God's creation or the testimony of God's children, he is immediately faced with the question, "What is God like?" Here is where the Bible takes up. And here is where religions contend. The gospel is the message of what God is offering man and God has made it clear that we will be unable to receive what He offers if we make a wrong assessment of what He is like.

The Scripture assumes that the existence of God is of such an obvious and apparent nature that only the fool would say there is no God. It takes the higher course of revealing this One whose existence is seen in all that is made and whose image marks the depths of our souls but who is at this time hid from our eyes. One of the greatest if not the greatest mission of God's Word is to show what God is like.

The Word of God has Shown Us the Father. When the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, He, as "the image of the invisible God", was showing the world what God was like. He was "God manifest in the flesh" and "the express image of His [God's] person". When Philip asked, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us", Jesus said that seeing Him was seeing the Father. And this One whom no man has seen at any time, has been "declared" by the Son. As Jesus walked the earth, He was the perfect picture of what God is like.

God's Word Reveals the Father. We have this picture now, full and true, painted for us in the pages of God's Word, no longer limited to a time and locality, but gone out into the whole world. In addition, our picture of God is expanded and clarified by the Apostles, and in combination with the revelation to holy men of old, the Scripture gives us a thorough and sufficient representation of our Creator. The Bible has shown the world what God is like! The one who would seek God is not left to wander in the dark. He has but to look in the pages of Scripture for the revelation. The answer to the question, "What is God like?", is found there and it is an unexpectedly wonderful answer.

The Two Elements of Faith. Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:6 as believing that God not only "is", but that He also is a rewarder of the diligent seekers. "Coming to God" here is broken down into two fundamental and essential elements. In order to come to God one must first know that He exists. This in itself is not sufficient to please God since the demons themselves have attained to this level of belief. What is further required is an understanding of what God is truly like.

There are many false and conflicting views of God's approachability, most depending upon the seeker's degree of moral attainment. God, however, has revealed Himself as one that not only welcomes but rewards those who come to Him. This glorious welcome is not unconditional but is by no means exclusionary. God's condition for rewards is diligent seeking and not spotless reputation. Therefore, anyone who strongly desires and expends unfainting effort gets the prize. This makes access to God open to whosoever will. Faith involves knowing that God is like this and that He wants to reward us. Knowing this drives us on to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ. There is, then, a definite and marked impact on the way we live. Holy living is the result of access to God and not the condition for it.

The Rewarding God. In Jesus' parable of the pounds (Lk. 19:12-27), the one who had laid up his Lord's pound in a napkin did it because of what he thought his Lord was like. He did not believe that his Lord was a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. The other two servants obvi-

ously knew Him to be a rewarder. Moses esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:26). Our understanding of what God is like will affect the way we serve Him and ultimately whether we are accepted by Him. The importance of this cannot be overstated. The correct view of God means rewards, the wrong view means punishment in outer darkness (Mt. 25:30)! With this in mind, consider how God wants us. . . no requires us to know that He is a rewarder in order to come to Him. This revolutionizes how we serve Him. The way people serve God reveals their view of what He is like.

Let us Examine Ourselves. Let us then, apply this simple test to the modern church and to ourselves. Does your service to God appear to be that of one running to obtain a prize (I Cor. 9:24)? Do your works represent one who is temperate in all things and who has suffered the loss of all things to win Christ? Or does your service better resemble one who is laden with guilt and fear, and who ventures little for the kingdom? This reveals whether you see God as a rewarder, or as an austere man. Surely your slothfulness and halting efforts would be transformed by an awakening and vitalizing realization of God's desire to reward you! "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" (Col. 3:23-24).

He Is Our Reward. God rewards the individual's seeking. The reward is finding what one has diligently sought. This is God revealing Himself as the answer and end of all our seeking. He is our "exceeding great reward." Here the age old promise is confirmed, "But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 4:29). Again in Jeremiah, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). We finally come to the end of our striving and searching when we truly find Him, whom to know is life. The one who finds Him desires nothing else and the one without Him will never be satisfied. "And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12). --**The End**--

The Day of Judgment. Given the fact that God is, and also that this is a moral universe (a realm that is strictly governed by Divine principles and laws), these things should draw thinking men to the conclusion that there will be a day of Divine reckoning. This day is called in Scripture the Day of Judgment (cf. Mt. 10:15; 11:22; 12:36; II Pet. 2:9; 3:7; I Jn. 4:17; see Isa. 30:18).

Salvation's Personal Element. Men are not saved by such things as an *impersonal* compliance with a so-called "plan of salvation." Scripture's repeated mentionings of the Savior (Lk. 2:11; Jn. 4:42; Acts 13:23; Phil. 3:20; I Tim. 4:10; etc.), the Lord Jesus Christ, and our *great High Priest* (Heb. 7:24-25) all point to the necessary *personal* element in salvation. Men are saved by believing and obeying the gospel, to be sure, but they are also saved by the blessed Savior and Mediator between God and men (I Tim. 2:5), without whom there would be no salvation. Let us consider well salvation's personal element. --*Editor*

When the Savior Comes and Knocks

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when He will return from the wedding; that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open unto Him immediately” (Lk. 12:35-36).

He Shall Knock at His Appearing. The *knock*, as it is used here, signifies Christ’s earnest desire and determination to gain a loving entrance and welcome into His church when He shall come again at the last day. The day and the hour is advancing quickly for all men when the Savior will at last *come and knock* at their door. For some it will be a *knock* that has been long awaited and yearned for; but for others it will be a knock of surprise and alarm, and that which will catch them completely off guard. Some are ready now to open to the Lord Jesus *immediately when He comes and knocks*. There are, alas, myriads of others, it seems however, who would rather not think about His coming and its associated abrupt and calamitous interruption of their entanglements in this present evil world. *But His knock will be heard by all!*

He will come and knock because, as Lord of all (Acts 10:36), He has every right to do so and because He has declared long ago that He will do so. But even more than this, because of His blessed and glorious Person, *His soon-to-be-heard knock* to gain entrance ought to be desired by all *much more* than all the paltry and vain tinsel that earth has to offer. Those who presently do not desire Him above all else simply have been deceived by the old serpent.

His certain knock will prove to be the ultimate test for readiness in men. *That audible rapping, associated in the above text with His coming*, signifies Christ’s expectancy of preparedness in men at all times for His return. His love will not be upon the ones who only started in the race to Heaven by an obedience to the gospel which they have outlived, but rather it shall be upon those who also have endured (Mk. 13:13) and continued in His love (Jn. 15:9) unto the end. *Christ’s knock* will make manifest, beyond the shadow of a doubt, men’s love and devotion for their Lord, or the absence of that love, as the case may be.

Those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (Eph. 6:24) will greatly delight in His knock along with the swift and certain cessation that His appearing will bring to life’s trials and afflictions. For such ones “everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35:10). But for those who are not looking for Him, His knock will be greatly disconcerting: because for them it shall entail the beginning of sorrows and pain that shall have no end.

His Knock in the Present Time. “Behold, *I stand* at the door, *and knock*” (Rev. 3:20). This is a *knock* that can be heard in the present time, but only by those who have ears to hear it. The exalted Savior is here speaking to one of His churches, which had distanced themselves from Him (Laodicea). And precisely so He speaks to all churches and individuals today who have gotten themselves into such a spiritually-impoverished and jeopardous condition (cf. 3:17). He knocks to gain entrance to men’s hearts (particularly those who have professed His Name). But to all who will open to Him now, Christ promises: “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Oh, what a wonderful Savior and Lord that we have!

The Lord Jesus both desires and seeks to gain entrance into hearts and to maintain a mutual, loving fellowship *now* in men, who have professed His Name. What a shame it is that He would even *have to* seek entrance into those of His church?? But, contrastively, oh, what a blessed joy and privilege it is to sup with the exalted Savior, and He with us, even now while we are yet sojourning through these low grounds of sin and sorrow! Such supping (that is, fellowshiping) *now* with Christ is indispensable to our spiritual well being, for it is readying us for that blessed and long-awaited time when *the Savior shall come and knock* at our door at the last day. Then He shall not only knock at the door of our hearts, but also at the door of our entire beings. At that day He shall not

only knock in order that He may sup with us, but rather that He may take complete possession of us to be His bride throughout the ages to come.

Now the Savior’s *knock* to gain entrance (Rev. 3:20) is heard only by receptive and tender hearts. But *when He shall come and knock at the last day*, His knock shall be clearly and distinctly heard by all. Now the noise of other things can smother out the sound of Christ’s knock, if permitted to do so. But in the last day His knock will drown out all competitive earthly noise.

In conclusion, let us speak a word to all who have been baptized into Christ Jesus, and who are continuing in the faith: let such ones continually give the Lord Jesus entrance *now* into their hearts, so that *when He comes and knocks at the last day*, they may open unto Him immediately, and that with great joy. And to those who are yet outside of the Lord Jesus Christ, may they repent of their sins and be baptized, calling upon the Name of the Lord. May such ones “continue in the faith, grounded and settled,” and “be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (Col. 1:23) so that they may be ready for the Savior *when He comes and knocks*. --Editor

The Martyrs

By William Cowper

“Their blood is shed

In confirmation of the noblest claim---

Our claim to feed upon immortal truth,

To walk with God, to be divinely free

To soar and to anticipate the skies.

Yet few remember them. They lived unknown

Till persecution dragged them into fame,

And chased them up to Heaven. Their ashes flew

No marble tells us whither. With their names

No bard embalms and sanctifies his song.

And history, so warm on meaner themes,

Is cold on this. She execrates, indeed,

The tyranny that doomed them to the fire,

But gives the glorious sufferers little praise.”

The Psalm 110 Text. Of all the Scriptures quoted by the Lord and the Apostles, few are so vitally pivotal as Psalm 110, particularly verses 1 through 4. There we see declared from ancient times the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, and particularly the nature of that reign (one that would be from God’s “right hand” but also *in the midst of Christ’s enemies* (see also I Cor. 15:25)). In other words, it is a reign that has as its primary objective the implementation of God’s purpose in salvation, and where all who reject and oppose Him shall be made Christ’s footstool *at the end*. Christ’s present dominion from the right hand of God is for the purpose of granting repentance and forgiveness of sins to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile (cf. Acts 5:31).

This Psalm also declares for the first time the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus (v. 4). In this Priesthood, ordained of God, we can readily see God’s desire for believing men to arrive safely in the world to come. We can also conclude of a certainty that *apart from this Priest none would be saved*. --Editor

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further attested (II Pet. 1:10). It is He that makes us to differ from the world and from our own natural selves; hence the fact of our variance is a sure sign of His work within us.

Its Two Principal Forms. The The experience of the contest with evil takes two principal forms. It occurs in the encounter with moral wrong. We find within ourselves the continual necessity of buffeting the body (Rom. 7:14-24; I Cor. 9:24-27). Grievous harassment also arises from environmental sources. We are in the midst of a wicked world; unrighteousness is the way of the unregenerate. With John, we can say, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I Jn. 5:19; cf. Gal. 1:4). We read of Lot that he "vexed his righteous soul from day to day" with the lawless deeds of his contemporaries; he was "sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked" (II Pet. 2:7-8, ASV). We are glad to learn of this suffering by Lot. Otherwise, we might have concluded that he was at peace with the sin about him, and so basically evil himself. His very vexation, however, is evidence of his inner righteousness. Without doubt, we shall be similarly pleased to learn "at that day," when God shall both judge and reveal "the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Rom. 2:14-16), that many whom we mistakenly classified as ungodly are to be reckoned with righteous Lot.

The experience of combat is equally associated with our contact with error in teaching. "Through Thy precepts I get understanding; therefore, I hate every false way," exclaimed the Psalmist (Ps. 119:104). Because the law of the Lord is in the heart of the believer, he is of necessity aligned against every divergence from it. Obviously in a day when the grossest departures in this area are rampant, this will entail "sore distress." "Their teaching and their whole philosophy irritate me; I find myself seething with resentment of them," confided a faithful brother with reference to atheistic pronouncements to which he was exposed. "I likewise recoil against religious doctrine that falls essentially short of the pure truth of God," declared another. These statements serve to illustrate this sphere of vexation for the child of God. He that has been truly "taught of God" (Jn. 6:45) will certainly come to feel this conflict, and the fact that he suffers in it bears testimony that, in the sense of Peter, he has "ceased from sin."

Actual Character of the New Creature

This view of the anguish involved in the struggle with sin sheds much light, as we have said, on the nature of the new creature in Christ Jesus. Essentially, it is the heart that has been regenerated; herein is the source of the intellect, the desire, the purpose, the volition. Thus, Paul could say, "With the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin" (Rom. 7:25); and John, "Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not" (I Jn. 3:5-10; 5:18).

The Warfare and Its Testimony. In conversion to Christ, a basic new alignment of the individual takes place; he goes over from the side of Satan to that of God. In apostolic language, he is delivered from "the power of darkness," and translated into "the kingdom of God's dear Son" (Col. 1:13; cf. Acts 26:16-18). Thenceforth, that part of him that made the transition---the inward man---is at war with all that is opposed to the Divine will. The flesh will not immediately be brought into complete subjection; that will require much time, and much of God's grace. But all the while the purpose of the believer is steadfast, the battle is maintained, and the opposition kept up. And the existence of the purpose, attested by the suffering it occasions, evinces the cessation from sin in the spiritual sense.

In this view, the fundamental nature of the disobedient also appears in bold relief. If there is no spiritual clash with the adversary---no inner conflict---and consequently no vexation of soul in the course of a professed discipleship of Christ, it is certain that one has not "ceased from sin," as that term is used by Scripture. The absence of conflict and distress becomes an index of an unregenerate heart---one in which the love of sin has not been given up. Such an individual has not resolutely purposed complete subjugation of sin within himself, nor declared war upon it without, and so has not entered upon relentless opposition to it. Those enjoying an unbecoming congeniality with this world ought to give serious attention to these circumstances. Too much at-homeness in the body and in the world is certain indication of separation from the Lord (II Cor.

5:6).

Two Precious Considerations. Two exceedingly precious considerations emerge at this point. The first is that such vexation was we have contemplated, endured in the line of Christian faith and loyalty, is to be reckoned as a fellowship with Jesus in His sufferings. Whatever distress we experience in conformity to His death is in essence the effect of His reproach, not ours (Jn. 15:17-22; Rom. 15:3). Thus, are we given to "fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ" in our flesh (Col. 1:24). This fellowship with our Lord was coveted by Paul (II Cor. 12:10; Phil. 3:7-11), and was a source of joy to the other Apostles, who "departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name" (Acts 5:41). As James exhorts, we also should "count it all joy" when we are permitted to take up our cross and follow in the steps of the suffering Savior (Jas. 1:2; cf. I Pet. 2:21).

The other consideration apparent from our reflections is to be no less treasured, "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our comfort also aboundeth through Christ"; that is, as we partake of the afflictions, so also do we share in the comfort and glory of His fellowship (II Cor. 1:3-7). This is why Paul so eagerly aspired to know "the fellowship of His sufferings"---that he might experience "the power of His resurrection," and be granted to company with the exalted Lord in the resurrected life (Phil. 3:8-11). "It is a faithful saying," proclaimed he: "For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (II Tim. 2:11-12). The suffering occasioned by the denial of "ungodliness and worldly lusts" (Tit. 2:11-14), as well as that entailed by other demands made upon us by our faith in Christ, is "not worthy to be compared" with the glory and joy of the indwelling Lord, to which it brings us (Rom. 8:18).

Wherefore, brethren, let us "comfort one another with these words" (I Thess. 4:18), and, like the early believers, take joyfully the "fight of afflictions" falling to us from the Lord (Heb. 10:32-39). ---**THE END**---

"The Devil we are to resist and he will flee from us, but the lusts of the flesh we must flee, or they will surely overcome us."

The Table Of Remembrance

By Robert Cobb

"Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness" (Psa. 30:4).

The table of remembrance has been, of a long time, under attack by the wicked one. Satan has deluded the minds of men to think shallow thoughts concerning this divinely appointed meeting. We who gather around the Lord's table do so because the Lord has called us there. We are more at home remembering Him than when we are remembering anything else. The world calls upon us to remember many things: some things good and many others that have been designed by Satan to distract us from the kingdom of God.

Christ delivered unto us this table of remembrance under extreme circumstances. You will remember that it was on the same night in which He was betrayed that He took the bread and the cup, blessed it and gave it to His disciples. This was, speaking as a man, an extremely difficult evening for our Lord. It was the night when the Shepherd was to be smitten and His sheep would abandon him. It was the night when He would enter into a garden and pray in such agony to the Father that His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground. (Lk. 22:44). This was the same night that He gave us this precious table of remembrance.

The saints of God are in great need of remembering the redemptive work of Christ. We have a treasure in an earthen vessel and it is of vital importance for us to continually have our minds washed by the word of God. This body is of the earth, and it desires the things of the earth. While it is true that we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit we must walk in the light, just as He is in the light. Then we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

"Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy Name, and to the remembrance of Thee" (Isa. 26:8).

The Remembrance of God. Saints have always had a desire to remember their God. This is the normal response of anyone who has seen the Lord. To those who believe, He is precious. We long for the day when we will forever be in the presence of God. So, the question is not "how often do we have to meet at the Lord's table?" but rather, those who have tasted that the Lord is good say, "the desire of my soul is to remember my God." When salvation has become more dominant in your thinking than this present world there is a desire to see God more clearly.

The Great High Priest. We are presently in the waiting stance. Christ is presently reigning from the right hand of His Father. He is there for us! It is He that ever liveth to make intercession for all those who come unto God by him. We are presently seated with Him in heavenly places. But our bodies are very much here in this sin-blighted world (which is under the curse of God). We have escaped this present world only to the extent that we have taken hold of the heavenly things. If Jesus is going to assist us then we must turn from the idols of this world and cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart. Jesus is not going to compete with the Devil for our souls. He said: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" (Lk. 9:23). And again in another place He declared: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me" (Mt. 10:37-38). The Lord Jesus Christ has gone on record as telling men that unless they deny themselves, they cannot be His disciple. This means that He won't teach you how to overcome the world. You will not find the grace to help you overcome the Devil. Jesus is serious about saving people from sin, but make no mistake about it, he will not save anybody who has not turned away from this present evil world in order to trust and rely on His saving grace.

Bad News, Good News. This is a matter that is quite alarming to the flesh, and it is designed to be such because flesh and blood cannot

inherit the kingdom of God. The things of God do not primarily profit the flesh. Actually the things of the Spirit and the flesh are contrary the one to the other. Flesh is never going to be interested in Heaven because Heaven itself speaks of death to the flesh. God is soon going to burn up everything that the flesh loves. Therefore, the flesh wants nothing to do with Heaven. BUT if anyone comes after Jesus and does crucify the flesh, with the affections and lust, of such ones the Savior said: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Mt. 10:42). Jesus has good news for all those who seek Him with a humble heart.

The table of the Lord is for the purpose of remembering the Lord! The participation at the Lord's table is not limited to the spiritually-elite (if there is such a thing), but rather it is a place where all saints come together to remember what our great God has accomplished in His Son, Jesus Christ. While we are there we are to examine ourselves and eat! If we truly see ourselves as God does this will prompt us to see our great need for this table. John tells us in his epistle that if we say we have no sin, we make God a liar (1 Jn. 1:10), for all have sinned and do continue to come short of the glory of God. This is the primary reason for this table. It is to ever and forever cause us to remember that when we were without the ability to save ourselves, God saved us through the death, burial and resurrection of His Son.

Who is at the table? Christ said on the night that He gave us this table "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 22-23:16). Our Lord still desires with a great desire to meet with us at his table. God can now be touched with the feeling of our infirmities because of the redemptive work of Christ. On the day of Pentecost the Lord sent forth His Spirit into the hearts of men. They could now be touched with the realities of glory. They could understand God and comprehend the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. And, from that day till now, men who are filled with the Spirit love to meet with their God at this table which their Lord has spread. Our Great God has bid us come and drink of the water of life freely, who then, would deny the Lord of glory? By not coming and partaking at this most blessed table men are forsaking the only true God.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This table was given at the feast of the passover. Most believers know about the exodus that the children of Israel made out of the land of Egypt. God brought them out with a mighty arm. It is not by chance that this table is associated with that event. Jesus was about to deliver the entire world from sin. He was about to have the full load of iniquity and transgression squarely placed upon His back and He would then carry them away. Both God and men would reject him as He went out of the presence of God into "a land not inhabited" (cf. Lev. 16:22). But praise be unto God, Christ came back from the dead! He was triumphant over the grave, He had purchased many men for our great God! He also purchased a kingdom for His redeemed people to inhabit. All these things were pictured in the exodus from Egypt. But there is another picture to which this table of remembrance points. It is the marriage supper of the Lamb. It points to a time when God himself will dwell with men. It draws our attention to the appointment God has made with all those who believe and are found worthy on that day when Christ returns. God will lift up his hand, sending the reapers across the face of the earth to transport the sons of God to the wedding supper of the Lamb.

For those who are pressing in to know God, the table of remembrance is filled with the goodness of God. But to those who would presume upon the blood of Christ the table will prove to be a witness against them, for this table pictures and exemplifies the purpose of God in salvation to every man. Therein is the grace of God shown forth to the world. Let us who are of the day rejoice, give thanks and sing! For the Lord truly has been good to us in giving the gift of the Lord's table to the church.

The Fellowship of the Blood Of Christ

By Robert Cobb

Throughout Scripture God teaches man that life is in the blood. Way back in the time of Noah God instructed them not to drink the blood of animals. In fact it was referred to as the life of the animal "which is the blood." They were to abstain from eating blood. He also affirmed to them that "whosoever sheddeth man's blood," by another man, his life was to be taken. The reason should resound in the ears of man to the ends of the earth "for in the image of God made he man" (Gen. 9:6). This word of God has not been altered in the day we live in. This is the God who changes not, that is speaking in these Scriptures. He still, even under the new covenant, requires man to abstain from eating blood. The Life is in the blood (Lev. 17:11)!

Why all this care to instruct men about regarding blood as being precious? It is because of the Lamb of God who would be shedding His blood for the remission of our sins. The Jews, prior to Christ's crucifixion, said "let His blood be on us, and on our children." And these people, because of their upbringing in the law and the prophets, certainly knew what they were saying. The Lord has not held them guiltless, but he has exacted from them the payment, which was due from them with many and severe chastisements. But soon they shall return unto the God who shall lift up His hand to them (cf. Isa. 49:22). Soon the veil will be taken away (II Cor. 3:16) and they shall say "blessed is he that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Lk. 13:35). They shall see that truly Jesus the carpenter is Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Blood is just about everywhere today. If you go to the movies you will hard pressed to find one that isn't filled with violence and blood. The video games are filled with violence and bloody death. And even though no one is *actually* being killed in any of these situations, still the masses of people are becoming desensitized to what blood is really all about. Science and psychology have come up with long explanations of what life really consists of, but God says that the life is in the blood. If you don't believe Him try living without it! I do not think that anyone would live very long, in fact, I can't even give blood very often or I get really weak.

The blood imparted Life! In the sacrifices of the tabernacle worship everything was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice (Heb. 9:19-21). In this way the blood would *typically* impart life to all those who had it sprinkled on them. But was there anything magical about this process? No! God taught us in the exodus from Egypt the value of blood. You will remember that everyone who had the blood on the door post of their house had their lives spared as the death angel went in and out among the Egyptians. The sacrifice was an innocent animal that was not able to atone for sin, but was a type and a shadow to teach man that a life had to end in order to deliver us from sin.

The Blood of Christ. Christ was with the Father in the beginning. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God and yet He came down to man, He was born of a woman, born under the law to redeem all those who were under the law. This Man would be like every other man, and yet, from another perspective, He would be like no other man. He would feel the pull of temptation because He had a body like ours, yet He never yielded to the lust of the flesh. The Scripture tells us that He suffered being tempted. This was the only Man who always did the things that pleased his Father (cf. Jn. 8:29). He was the only One who magnified the law and made it honorable (cf. Isa. 42:21). It was this perfect Man that was ordained from the foundation of the world to be the Lamb of God that was slain for the sins of the world. Life for life! He gave his lifeblood for the sins of the world.

The Scriptures tell us that He entered into the holy place (Heaven) with His own blood (cf. Heb. 9:12). Righteousness can now be imputed to every man who has the blood applied to the door post of his heart. Christ ever lives to make intercession for the sins of His people. This great and marvelous salvation is all owing to one Man that gave up His life so that we could have life, and have it more abundantly!

Now as we who believe gather together we exalt the great name of Jesus. We meet on the first day of the week to celebrate our new life in the Savior. Just as the Apostles taught us to gather and break bread together at the Lord's table, it is our pleasure and privilege to do this as often as we do in remembrance of our great God and King. His blood will never lose its power for He has entered into Heaven to appear in the Presence of God for us. --**The End**--

Impossible for God to Lie. "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18). Let us take comfort in this impossibility. How could the Lord God express any more clearly His desire that you be with Him for ever. There are teachings (doctrines of devils) afoot in the world, that are subtly designed to cause men to question the faithfulness, the certainty, and the unquestionable applicability of God's promises to all who believe. If you are ever tempted to reason that God might deceive you in this matter (and the old serpent will from time to time introduce this temptation), then you must diligently call to remembrance this word of the Scripture that *it is impossible for God to lie!* --*Editor*

Fled for Refuge. "We might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:18). This is an allusion to the cities of refuge, unto which manslayers were to flee for the preservation of their lives under the first covenant. With the same diligence and earnestness men and women in the new covenant *flee* to the Savior for safety. They have fled, and are fleeing, for refuge from the condemnation associated with the natural order. And they have fled to Him for shelter from the wrath to come.

But in Christ they have not only fled to a place of safety with respect to the time in this present world. In the City of Refuge, to which they have fled, they have found an anchor for their souls. It is an anchor that has been cast within the veil where Christ has entered. It is an anchor which gives them confidence and stability. There is no anchor to be found here in entanglements and pursuits that are of this world. --*Editor*

Our Great High Priest

*“The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou art a Priest for ever
after the order of Melchizedek” (Ps. 110:4).*

The Lord Jesus Christ is very little known in the capacity of High Priest among typical churchmen, as most “Christian” people today content themselves with a mere surface view of the Scriptures, depending entirely upon ministers and preachers to pabulum-feed them when it is convenient for them. It is absolutely necessary, however, that this One, who was made a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, be spiritually and intelligently known for who He is by all who would receive salvational benefits from Him. In the sacrifice of Christ a death has occurred which has effectively put away the sins of the world, to be sure. But as our “great High Priest” (Heb. 4:14), Christ Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us (7:25) and to personally ensure that His death for sins on the Cross was not died in vain. Thus it is essential that men and women perceive and comprehend, by faith, the present ministry of the Lord Jesus at God’s right hand, if they would live acceptably before God with a purged conscience.

The Psalm 110 Text. The solemnity that surrounds the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ can be evidently seen in the Psalm 110 text (printed above). The making of Christ High Priest *with an oath by God* means that utmost urgency and importance are associated with this matter.

The law of Moses taught us that oaths, even when they were made by men, were associated with great seriousness (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 23:21, etc.). Thus when properly considering this oath made by God Himself, men can no longer be casual. They must give themselves to the earnest consideration of what is involved here. They must not deliberately or carelessly ignore that to which God has sworn with an oath, as it is a matter which directly bears on their eternal well being.

Whenever God speaks, His words are without exception associated with great importance (Ps. 62:11). How much more is this the case when He confirms and undergirds what He is saying with an oath?

The oath spoken of here in Psalm 110 should cause men to conclude that God is serious about saving them and bringing them safely to the world to come. He has appointed His Son to be High Priest to ensure safe passage and safe arrivals for all who believe the gospel. But, by the same token, men must earnestly consider and avail themselves of this High Priest in order that they may be partakers of the benefit. Christ Jesus, in His capacity as High Priest, “is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (cf. Heb. 7:24-25).

The Lord hath sworn, *and will not repent*. In other words, the Lord God will not turn away from this oath which He has made. He will not abandon His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus, and switch to another plan or purpose. He will faithfully remain the hope of all who avail themselves of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. He will never desert those who obey the gospel of His beloved Son and who continue to trust in His salvation. These are but some of the involvements of this oath made by the Lord God Himself.

Thou art a Priest for ever. The very establishment of a High Priest in the Divine purpose and economy, demonstrates God’s great love for those created in His image, but who also had fallen by transgression. If the Holy One and the High and Lofty One is to lovingly relate to, and be joined unto, those that had sinned and come short of His glory, (not only in this life, but also in the one that is to come), He must have a High Priest to stand between Him and the people. Let us, therefore, make much of our great High Priest! Let us ever seek to perceive more of His greatness!

Christ has been made *a High Priest forever*. This was not mere-

ly to confer upon the Lord Jesus an empty or meaningless title. Christ was made High Priest because this was absolutely necessary if men are to be saved. They must “come unto God by Him” (Heb. 7:25) who is the High Priest. He was made a High Priest forever to ensure that believing men and women would have hope in Christ, not only in this life, but also in the ages to come. If you properly consider the words of this solemn declaration made here in Psalm 110, you will arrive at the conclusion, among other things, that the Lord God earnestly desires that you, and all who will believe, be with Him throughout the eternal ages. But for men to ignore or be casual about this matter, only demonstrates that they want no part nor lot in this matter. Unless they repent and obey the gospel, God will have no choice but to cast them away forever.

The Necessity of Christ’s High Priesthood. “Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17).

*A great High Priest our nature wears,
The Guardian of mankind appears.*

In the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ we have someone who has been made like us perhaps much more than we have imagined, and yet He is also like “the High and Lofty One” (Isa. 57:15) much more than we have considered. He is the express Image of the Father. He Himself declared, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). And yet in all things it was necessary that He be made like His brethren.

In appointing Christ to be High Priest God has taken full cognizance of the fact, that, though His people are determined to sin not (1 Jn. 2:1) and to strive against sin (Heb. 12:4), yet there will be those humiliating occasions when they will give in to temptation and fall into sin. The New Covenant is not established upon the doing of commandments (cf. Heb. 8:6), neither is it *regulated by* laws, as the first covenant was. Rather it is effectively mediated by a Person: “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5), our great High Priest. Take the High Priesthood of Christ out of the Divine economy and away from men’s earnest consideration, and the New Covenant, the forgiveness of sins, acceptance with God, etc., all plummet down to the ground.

It was not only necessary that Christ be put to death for our sins, but also that He “make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” And this He does as High Priest at the right hand of God (cf. Heb. 2:17). In order to appease and satisfy God’s wrath against sin, it was not only needful that His death occur, but subsequently also that there be a living Personality in the Presence of God to mediate the effects and virtues of that death. And if we could so speak, because of the Presence of our great High Priest before the living God, the death of Christ and the blood of Christ along with their wonderfully sanctifying effects are made to be continually and vitally satisfying to God (Isa. 53:11) and relevant to men, and ever associated with newness.

In Heaven Christ’s death for sins is not viewed merely as an historical event that occurred 2,000 years ago. In the Revelation we see the vision of the “Lamb as it had been slain” (Rev. 5:6). Neither the passage of time in this world nor the endless ages in the world to come can or will diminish the blessed effects of Christ’s death for our sins.

Considering our Great High Priest. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Heb. 3:1).

It is both good and necessary for those who make a profession of faith to consider our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is something that other men and women cannot do in your stead. They may provoke you to consider Him, but in the final analysis, you must do the considering. You must take possession of your mind and thought processes and use them to the glory of God and for your own eternal benefit.

As you consider the Lord’s Christ your heart will be inclined unto Him and also to working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. And you will be disposed to doing the right thing as you reflect upon Him.

Considering unites your heart's affection with God's purpose and with what He is doing salvationally through the Lord Jesus Christ. But those who refuse or neglect this kind of considering will certainly sell themselves short. Such ones are in danger of being rejected by the God of Heaven.

Holding Fast our Profession. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession" (Heb. 4:14).

Our earnest regard for the High Priest is not a take-it-or-leave-it option. The only conclusion that we can draw here is that if men do not consider Christ Jesus in the sense spoken of here, they will not, yea, they will not be able to hold fast their profession of faith. They will certainly abandon the faith apart from an earnest consideration of our great High Priest. Our adversary, the Devil, is walking about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Though we have sinned, and do sin, there is, by God's grace, a sympathetic One in Heaven, *who was tempted to sin, but did not sin*. The consideration of Him will give grace to not sin, and help us to quickly recover when we do sin. Let us ever give thanks to our heavenly Father for the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest!

Let us Avoid Dullness of Hearing. "Called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:10-11).

For flesh, the consideration of a High Priest at the right hand of God is something that is "hard to be uttered" and also hard to be considered. It appears that we have a whole generation of religious professors on our hands that is dull of hearing. They are not familiar nor conversant with these heavenly things and they do not see nor feel within themselves the need to fervently consider these matters about which we are speaking. Their theology may not state, but it implies that the High Priest is not really necessary in order for men to presently relate to the living God and to make it safely to the world to come. In their works and in their speech and in their living they deny the High Priest of their profession. In many church circles Christ is virtually unknown in the capacity of High Priest. This is a great travesty upon the truth of God's Word. Let us seek by the grace of God to make Him known!

Christ our Forerunner. "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6:19-20).

Christ, our High Priest is also *our Forerunner*. That is to say, His Priesthood not only has pertinence to living in this world, but also to arriving safely in the one which is to come. And when we think of Christ as our Forerunner it is not simply a matter of Him being in Heaven and we upon earth. Rather the situation is this: that where He presently is, there we soon shall be also by the grace of God (cf. Jn. 14:3). As the great High Priest, believing men have a Representative in Heaven that God recognizes. As the great Forerunner, they have One who has gone on before them, and whom they are soon to follow after.

Incidentally, when we speak of *arriving safely* in "the world to come" (Heb. 2:5), it seems that the primary dangers that would militate against this safety are "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I Jn. 2:16). In other words, our greatest enemy is within us: our old man, namely that which is not born from above. As Satan seeks to oppose men's entrance into the world to come, he needs only to make appeal to that part of men which is yet unregenerated. Let us therefore see that our old man remains crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6) and that we have and maintain a good understanding in this matter. And, finally, let us make take full advantage of our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him (cf. Heb. 7:25). --*Editor*

On Preaching and Spiritual Focus

By Jesse Stoner

It seems that the church has lost most of its spiritual focus. It has trivialized the significant things, and what is trivial it has made significant.

With a mad rush the church as a whole seems to have prostituted herself in an effort to be what the world wants her to be. She has left her first love (Rev. 2:4), her espoused Husband (II Cor. 11:2), chasing after things that will certainly result in the loss of everything that God designed her for (see I Cor. 2:9).

In Matthew 21:42-43, Jesus declares Himself to be the chief cornerstone of the church. We oftentimes mindlessly skip over these words when we read Scriptures such as this, or even when we sing "The Church's One Foundation."

It is my personal observation that in an effort to secure what has been called a "productive ministry," men are often careful not to be offensive to their audiences. Otherwise they will lose their numbers, and most importantly to them, their paychecks. Such ought not to be the case.

Involved in believing on Christ is not a soft, gentle, easy transition, but rather brokenness (Mt. 21:44). Christ is that Stone upon which men must fall and be broken. It is the responsibility of preachers to proclaim this. When we preach Christ, and Him crucified, do we leave out the fact that we too must crucified, along with our very nature and desires (see Gal. 5:24)?

All too many congregational audiences have been conditioned by preachers that offer only milk, and not meat (see Heb. 5:13-14; I Pet. 2:2). An appetite for the things of God must be sustained by the meat of the Word as well as the milk of the Word.

When preaching, a careful checkpoint that one must follow is this: How much of what you say is your own words? How much are scriptural words, or words which the Holy Spirit teaches (I Cor. 2:13)? When all is said and done, will what you have preached burn with the rest of this condemned world, or will those in the ramparts of Heaven echo back the words you have spoken with a resounding "Amen!"?

The Context of Romans Eleven

By Given O. Blakely

The eleventh chapter of Romans confirms that ultimately, God's purpose for His people will triumph. The circumstances of the Jewish nation appear to have obscured the divine agenda, engulfing it in a sea of impossibility. But this is not a proper perspective. The divine agenda actually encircles the circumstance, providing a basis for faith and hope. Paul appeals to the prophet Elijah. That holy man of God stood alone against the forces of evil. Single handedly, he slew 450 prophets of Baal, culminating a contest on Mount Carmel. As great as that triumph was, Elijah soon found himself in an apparent desert, destitute of fellowship, and with no obvious colleagues in faith. He intercedes "against Israel," affirming that he is the solitary believer that remains (Rom. 11:2-3).

God Reveals Something Hidden. Although Elijah's assessment was incorrect, God does not ignore his words! He shares with the disheartened prophet something that was not apparent. ". . . I have reserved to Myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal" (Rom. 11:3). Notice, God does not simply say "7,000 have not bowed," but that He has "reserved" for Himself 7,000 that have not yielded to Baal! The text from First Kings reads, "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel--all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him" (1 Kgs. 19:18). Israel had not totally forsaken their God! There were some who refused to serve Baal, and God preserved them for Himself. The times were bad--unusually bad--but God did not abandon Israel as a whole! He saw those inclined to Him and chose them! He favored them, and thus preserved them.

So it is with Israel! In Paul's day, as well as in ours, it looks as though Israel is hopeless. Believers represent a relative smattering of the race, so much so that some have concluded there is no hope for them. But this is not the conclusion of God! "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5). God's choices are not affected by decadent generations! In every age and time, there have been those who have sought the Lord in purity of heart. His nature is to choose such, even though they dwell "in the midst of a people of unclean lips." The consistency of such people is owing to God's choice of them. He did not choose them because they were consistent. They are consistent because He chose them! He has sustained them because He prefers them.

The Admixture of Grace and Works. Paul's argument is devastating to the flesh. He does not speak as an academic genius, but as a spiritual giant. "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6). There is a place in the kingdom where grace and work come together, but it is NOT at the foundation! Those who have received the grace of God are taught by it to avoid unrighteousness and freely indulge themselves in righteousness (Tit. 2:11-13). However, Paul is not looking at the "remnant" from that perspective. He is showing that God Himself is the ultimate Cause for salvation. It is not a cooperative effort between God and man. If the BASIS for acceptance is the grace of God, it cannot be obtained meritoriously, or by "work." All of this is accomplished without God violating the volition of people or compromising His own character! Confidence is placed in God, not in our work! We do not despise "good works," because we have been "ordained" to "walk in them." In fact, salvation involves zealously for good works. As it is written, "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (Tit. 2:14). Those who are not eager to do good works lack evidence of regeneration. They assume too much in supposing they are accepted by God! The "redeemed of the Lord" still need a Savior. They have not yet attained--but they want to! They will not boast in their works, or imagine that they have reached the apex in "good deeds"--- but they want to! They are zealous to do so, look-

ing for an opportunity to glorify the God that saved them!

For many of the people with whom I have walked, it must be viewed like this: We do not have confidence in our baptism, but in the Christ into Whom we were baptized. Realizing it may be misunderstood, I must say, every denomination offers a substitute for Jesus---something other than Christ as a BASIS for confidence. Substitutes include baptism in water, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, healing, embracing a studied theological view, confirmation, etc. It is possible to place your confidence in the EFFECT rather than the CAUSE ---but it is never good to do so. When this takes place, the thing in which men trust becomes a "work," even though it is legitimate of itself. You cannot be saved by "grace" AND by "works!" As a cause, or basis, of salvation, grace stands by itself. It cannot be mixed with human endeavor, thereby providing a foundation for Divine acceptance. If this is not the case, grace loses its essential meaning, for it presupposes the lack of merit and achievement in the one upon whom it is bestowed. It is humiliating to some to be able to contribute nothing to their salvation. Our faith can receive it, but we cannot add to it! --406 S. Sergeant, Joplin, MO 64801

I'm But a Stranger Here

By Thomas R. Taylor

I'm but a stranger here, Heaven is my home;
Earth is a desert drear, Heaven is my home:
Danger and Sorrow stand
Round me on every hand;
Heaven is my fatherland, Heaven is my home.

What though the tempest rage, Heaven is my home;
Short is my pilgrimage, Heaven is my home:
And time's wild wintry blast
Soon shall be overpast;
I shall reach home at last, Heaven is my home.

There, at my Saviour's side, Heaven is my home;
I shall be glorified, Heaven is my home:
There are the good and blest,
Those I love most and best;
And there I too shall rest, Heaven is my home.

Therefore I murmur not, Heaven is my home;
Whate'er my earthly lot, Heaven is my home:
And I shall surely stand
There at my Lord's right hand;
Heaven is my fatherland, Heaven is my home.

An Appropriate Consideration. For His own sake God has blotted out our transgressions through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (cf. Isa. 43:25). What an appropriate consideration this is to remember at the Lord's table. --Robert Cobb

The Blessedness of Motherhood

By Given O. Blakely

The first commandment with a promise had to do with mothers. "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2). That is the inspired application of Exodus 20:12, which was a promise to Israel. The word "honor" literally means "to glorify, promote, and make significant." It is as though God said, lift your mother up, recognize her significance, and promote her. The promise "and you will live long upon the earth."

While mothers are often known only for their indefatigable labors, there are other aspects to motherhood. To be sure, they do have a never-ending job, with all of their work being donated. With a mother, it would be good if even her illness could be scheduled. When she is out of activity, it is an inconvenience to the entire household. It is dependent upon her. That cannot be said of every household member.

That brings me to a point I feel needs to be made, and made strongly. Mothers have too often been pictured as servile, laboring under the law of her husband, and not authorized to make any decisions. With all the power of official religiosity it is affirmed, "The man is the head of the house." It might interest you to know, that is not found in Scripture. God does say "the head of the woman is the man" (I Cor. 11:3). It also says, "The husband is head of the wife." But it NEVER says the man is the head of the house! It remained for religious dignitaries to affirm that. Now, allow me to give honor to mothers in a unique, but needful, way.

The house is the mother's domain. There she even makes laws. Solomon twice counseled his son, "Do not forsake the LAW of your mother" (Prov. 1:8; 6:20). In a stirring tribute to the virtuous woman, the Word mentions business expertise, inconvenient work hours, and being trusted by her husband. "The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain . . . She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard . . . She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy . . . She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the merchants . . . She opens her mouth with wisdom . . . she watches over the ways of her household . . ." (Prov. 31:10-31). That certainly does not sound like a servile "may I please do it" person! No! She is a manager and a good mother is a good manager.

Some will object to these words, saying that the woman has a place, but not in leadership even though that observation sharply conflicts with the Word of their God! But they are wrong, and grievously so. The Apostle Paul also spoke of this Divine arrangement, and with words of great strength. "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, GUIDE THE HOUSE, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully" (I Tim. 5:14). The word "guide" is stronger than some might suppose. The NKJV, NIV, and NRSV translate it "MANAGE the house." The RSV says "RULE the house." Grammatically, the word means "to be the head of," or "run." as in "run the household." That perfectly coincides with Solomon's revealed description of a virtuous woman. It is always in order to bow before the Word of the Lord. It is always out of order not to do so.

So I pay tribute to the mothers, including my own, who is now with the Lord, and my own wife. I honor them for being discreet business managers, providers of household goods, and considerate of the needs of others. For their wise sayings, expert counsel, and comforting words, I give honor to the mothers. For being a faithful minister in times of illness and depression, for putting others before herself, and for being an encouragement to their husbands, I pay tribute to the mothers. I honor them for rising at early and inconvenient hours to care for her family, prepare to entertain guests, and take care of business matters.

Most of all, I give honor to Christian mothers, who have taught their children the ways of the Lord. I praise them for singing the children to sleep with the songs of Zion, for teaching the value of God's Word, and

for making the family God-conscious. I respect them for their sensitivity to the will of the Lord, and their contributions to the household of faith. My own mother was a songstress for Jesus, blessing the people with her wonderful songs of encouragement and blessing. Bless God for the investment godly mothers have made in the kingdom of God throughout history! Thank God for all of you!

In conclusion, let us thank our heavenly Father for motherhood. Thank Him for the great mothers of history, who played a role in the shaping the world--the mothers of Moses, Isaac, John the Baptist, and His own Beloved Son! May all mothers be blessed with a knowledge of the Lord, of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. May He answer their prayers for their children and their husbands in Jesus' name, and for His sake! --406 S. Sergeant St., Joplin, MO 64801

Looking Upward Every Day

By Mary Butler

Looking upward every day,
Sunshine on our faces;
Pressing onward all the way
Toward the heavenly places;
Growing every day in awe,
For Thy Name is holy;
Learning every day to love
With a love more lowly;

Walking every day more close
To our elder Brother;
Growing every day more true
Unto one another;
Every day more gratefully
Kindnesses receiving;
Every day more readily
Injuries forgiving;

Leaving every day behind
Something which might hinder;
Running swifter every day,
Growing purer, kinder, ---
Lord, so pray we every day,
Hear us in Thy pity,
That we enter in at last
To the holy City.

We are an equipped people, equipped to live godly and serve the living God, as we walk through this life. --Robert Cobb

The Main Objective. Winning Christ and being found in Him, not having one's own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God in Christ by faith (cf. Phil. 3:9), ought to be the consuming desire and objective of every son and daughter of God. --Michael Blakely

The Case of Pharaoh

By Given O. Blakely

"For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Rom. 11:17).

It is true that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exod. 8:15,32; 9:34). It is also true that God hardened his heart (Exod. 10:1; 11:10; 14:8). According to the Holy Spirit, God "hardens whom He wants to harden" (Rom. 9:18, NIV). And who does God want to harden? We have an example in Pharaoh, and it is recorded for our learning and admonition! God wills to irremediably harden those who maintain obstinate hearts. Those who reject His counsel will, if they do not repent of the condition, be hardened by God. That is who He wills to harden. He does not make men's hearts impervious to His will and Word by caprice, arbitrarily, or to make repentance impossible for those desiring to change! Such views bring reproach upon the Lord! But let it be clear, those that dally with God stand on the precipice of condemnation. They are flirting with eternal death, and they do well to "rend" their hearts, as God demanded through Joel (Joel 2:13). If you have not thought about it lately, "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

Those who harden their own hearts, yet thinking they are accepted in that condition, are asking God to violate His own nature to save them. He will not do it! Either men subscribe fully and unreservedly to the truth as revealed through Jesus Christ, or salvation is not possible. God will give people a love for the truth if they will receive it. However, if they do not, they will suffer the consequences. As it is written, ". . . and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:10-12).

The Incontrovertible Conclusion. "Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden. One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists His will?' But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?' Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use? What if God, choosing to show His wrath and make His power known, bore with great patience the objects of His wrath--prepared for destruction? What if He did this to make the riches of His glory known to the objects of His mercy, whom He prepared in advance for glory--even us, whom He also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" (Rom. 11:18-24, NIV).

And upon whom will God have mercy? Those with "broken" and "contrite" spirits will find mercy with the Lord (Psa. 34:18; Isa. 57:15; 66:2). He will "prepare the heart" of the humble (Psa. 10:17). Those who "forsake" their wicked ways and unrighteous "thoughts" will receive mercy from the Lord (Isa. 55:7). God wills to do this! More specifically, those who believe the revealed Word about His Son, and act upon their faith, will experience His mercy in the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). The inclination of the Lord to give mercy is not hidden! He has graciously revealed His heart on this matter. He will, without exception, show mercy to those who are believing on His Son.

Those without faith will seek an excuse for their unbelief and recalcitrance. They choose to dwell in unbelief, and God will choose to harden and reject them. Even so, they are still used for "ignoble purposes," like Pharaoh of old. They cannot blame God for their condition, because He wills to have mercy on the humble and contrite. He has a right to reject them, because they had their origin in Him. He put them in His world, and surrounded them with evidence of His Person. But they refused to believe, and so He refuses to accept them! He has not violated their will, and He

will not allow them to violate His!

Let us thank our Father in Heaven for revealing His nature in Scripture, and the Person of His Son. It is clear how He feels about the obstinate, and also how He regards those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In the words of David, and in the name of Jesus, let us ever pray: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

The King's Business

By E. T. Cassel

I am a stranger here, within a foreign land;
My home is far away, upon a golden strand;
Ambassador to be of realms beyond the sea,
I'm here on business for my King.

This is the King's command: that all men everywhere,
Repent and turn away from sin's seductive snare;
That all who will obey with Him shall reign for aye,
And that's my business for my King.

My home is brighter far than Sharon's rosy plain,
Eternal life and joy throughout its vast domain;
My Sovereign bids me tell how mortals there may dwell,
And that's my business for my King.

Chorus

This is the message that I bring,
A message angels fain would sing:
"Oh, be ye reconciled,"
Thus saith my Lord and King,
"Oh, be ye reconciled to God."

The Anchor of the Soul

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. 10:19). In all the troubles and changes which are part of this life, let us cast our anchor upward within the veil. Let us set continually our affection on things above, from whence also we look for the Savior.

On this side of the veil is time, and the curse, and sin and death. But, bless God, *on that side of the veil* is our great High Priest and our heavenly Father and joys that are everlasting. This hope that we have is able to presently pass within the veil where the Savior is. We are not speaking here of a "hope so" type hope, but of one that is sure and steadfast, being anchored within the veil, where Christ, our Forerunner and High Priest, has entered (cf. Heb. 6:20).

For those who are willing to deny themselves and take up their crosses and follow the Savior, setting their affection on things above, the consideration of both the new covenant and of our great High Priest will afford them a strong consolation, enabling them to make their calling and election sure (II Pet. 1:10). --*Editor*

Beware of Religious Beguilement!

By Given O. Blakely

Believers are admonished to not allow anyone to deprive them of their reward. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2:18). The thought of such an admonition is absurd if rewards are unimportant. You must not permit anyone or any teaching to diminish the significance of receiving reward from the Lord. Jesus did not ask you to labor for nothing because He did not do so! He "endured the cross, despising the shame" in prospect of the "joy set before Him" (Heb. 12:1-2). Moses, faithful servant of God, contemplated rewards. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).

Remember the Reward! In practical instruction to the Colossians, Paul admonished them to do whatever they did "as to the Lord." He was to be their dominating consideration--the reason for everything they did. In his exhortation, Paul does not make an appeal to law, i.e., "you ought to do this." Rather, he reminded them of the reward they would receive from Jesus Himself. "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" (Col. 3:23-24).

Keep confident! Believers are cautioned not to lose confidence, casting it away in preference for the things of this world. Their faith may not appear to be accruing much for them here, but the day of reward is coming. Giving yourself confidently to Christ may not appear to have advantages here and now. But that is not a proper assessment, and we must not allow it to have place in our thinking. Listen to the Spirit, and His emphasis on reward. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Heb. 10:35). This reward is related to the very character of God--i.e., it is His nature and disposition to give rewards to the faithful. With great strength, this is affirmed in Hebrews 6:10. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." When He comes . . . REWARD!

When is the time of reward? It is at the appearing of Christ. He is bringing His reward with Him. Then all that your faith has grasped, you will obtain in fullness. The peaceful habitations you have longed for will be given to you. You will be duly compensated for every inconvenience and sacrifice you bore for Him. A "crown of righteousness" (II Tim. 4:8), a "new name" (Rev. 2:17; 3:12), and an unfading inheritance (I Pet 1:4) will be received. What of becoming a "ruler over many things" Matt 25:21), or inheriting "all things" (Rev. 21:7). Have you thought about being given "power over the nations" (Rev. 2:26) and judging "the world" and "angels" (I Cor. 6:2-3). These are large considerations, and they are true.

You do well to think of the Lord's return in relation to your reward. Then will be brought to pass the saying, "your labor is not vain in the Lord" (I Cor 15:58). --406 S. Sergeant, Joplin, MO 64801

"And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:12).

Chosen in Christ Jesus

By Given O. Blakely

Were it possible to remove the Son from the picture, there could be no "election of grace." No one, in any age, could be accepted by God if Jesus did not "lay down His life, a ransom for all." The patriarchs and those under the first covenant were received because of their faith in God,

and their anticipation of the coming "Seed," or Messiah. Salvation is "in Christ." Acceptance is "in Him." That is because of "the election of grace."

God charged Jesus with the total responsibility of resolving the human dilemma. He "sent the Son" into the world. Humanity did not ask for God to send His "only begotten Son." It was a divine initiative. The Father commanded Jesus to lay His life down, then take it up again (Jn. 10:18). Jesus spoke ONLY what God told Him to say (Jn. 8:28,38; 12:49). The Father "honored" the Son by raising Him from the dead and giving Him all authority in heaven and earth (Jn. 8:54; Rom. 1:4; Mt. 28:18; I Pet. 3:22). The Father is relying upon the Son to "bring many sons to glory" (Heb. 2:10), and if He does not do it, they will not be brought! All the glory of God's house has been placed upon Him, and Him alone (Isa. 22:22-24)!

Chosen in Him. The "election of grace" becomes effectual exclusively in Jesus Christ. In Him we are chosen, and only in Him! As it is written, "According as He hath chosen us IN HIM before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1:4). Jesus is "the elect" One; our election is by virtue of our union with Him. "Before the foundation of the world," God's consideration was basically of Christ Jesus. It was "in Him" that He determined to bring a vast number of people to Himself out of every kindred, and tribe, and nation! That means the entire Gospel initiative is designed to get people into Christ. God's aim is not to correct social ills, or bring recovery to political structures. His target is not the stability of the home, the school, the city, or the nation. His objective is, and always has been, to provide a way for us to be "in Christ," where His electing grace is realized. It should not be necessary to say this, but social issues are resolved indirectly (if resolvable) by abiding in, and maintaining fellowship with, Jesus Christ.

The saved of the earth are the products of God's own work. They are what they are because of His activity, not their own. They enter into the work, they employ their minds, and engage in labors for their God. However, it is only because of His work that they do so. When it comes to giving credit, we confess with Paul, "For we are His workmanship ("what He has made us, NRSV), created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). On a more personal level, all believers can confess, "I am what I am by the grace of God" (I Cor. 15:10).

Notice the centrality of Christ: our recreation took place "in Him." No one out of Christ is a new creation, and no one in Christ is NOT a new creation. "If ANY MAN be in Christ, he IS a new creature" (II Cor. 5:17). That is another way of looking at "the election of grace." Whatever view we may have of election or predestination, the Lord Jesus Christ had better be at its center. If He is not, then the view is simply wrong. --GivenB@aol.com

God's Counsel. The ordaining of the Lord Jesus Christ as High Priest with an oath, recorded in Psalm 110, was for the purpose of persuading (cf. Heb. 6:17) the heirs of promise of the immutability of God's counsel. That counsel included, among other things, their safe arrival in the world to come. --Editor

Motel Information For
***REFRESHING WATERS
RENEWAL 9***

CROWN POINT, INDIANA
JULY 28-30, 1998
(TUESDAY-THURSDAY)

Rates were quoted on April 18, 1998 for 2 adults, 4 nights. Rates do not include tax. When calling, ask for specials and discounts. If you don't ask, you may not get the best rate! All of these hotels are located near the Interstate 65 and Highway 30 junction.

FAIRFIELD INN

8275 Georgia St., Merrillville, IN
800-228-2800, 219-736-0500
\$59/night, 2 double beds

HAMPTON INN

8353 Georgia St., Merrillville, IN
800-426-7866, 219-736-7600
\$81/night, king bed

HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS

8375 Georgia St., Merrillville, IN
800-465-4329, 219-795-9500
\$79/night, king bed

RED ROOF INN

8290 Georgia St., Merrillville, IN
800-843-7663, 219-738-2430
\$56.99/night, king bed

KNIGHTS INN

8250 Louisiana, Merrillville, IN
800-843-5644, 219-736-5100
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Refreshing Waters Renewal #9
The Coming of the Lord!!

List of Messages and Speakers

THE FACT OF HIS COMING

Charles Gresham and Robert Cobb

LOOKING FOR HIS COMING

Seth Wilson

COMING IN POWER AND GLORY

Zack Waite

WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR

David Maddack

**OUR GATHERING TOGETHER TO
HIM**

Leon Bates

**THE PASSING OF THE NATURAL
ORDER**

Given Blakely and Ken Smith

THE NECESSITY OF READINESS

Gene Hutchcraft

HIS REWARD WILL BE WITH HIM

Jason Hutchcraft

HE WILL COME QUICKLY

Wallace Wartick

THE REAPERS

Michael Blakely

THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

Dwaine Dunning

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Wilbur Fields and Al Stoner

THE JUDGMENT OF THE WICKED

Dallas Burdette

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Refreshing Waters Renewal #9

To be held in
Crown Point, Indiana!
July 28-30, 1998

The Coming of the Lord!!

The ninth annual **Refreshing Waters Renewal** is scheduled to be held at **First Christian Church in Crown Point, Indiana**. David Maddack is the minister there. The general theme of this three day gathering will be *The Coming of the Lord*. The exact dates of the coming Renewal are July 28-30 (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday), 1998.

Message Titles

Some of the subjects to be dealt with in the coming Renewal are as follows: **The Fact of His Coming** (Acts 1:11; Jn. 14:3), **Looking for His Coming** (Heb. 9:28; Tit. 2:13), **Coming in Power and Glory** (Mt. 16:27; Mk. 13:26; Lk. 9:26), **When He Shall Appear** (Col. 3:4; I Jn. 3:2), **The Response of the Lost** (Rev. 1:7; Rev. 6:15-16), **Our Gathering Together unto Him** (II Thess. 2:1), **The Passing of the Natural Order** (II Pet. 3:10-14), **The Necessity of Readiness** (Mt. 24:44; 25:10), **His Reward Will be With Him** (Mt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12), **He Will Come Quickly** (Rev. 3:11; Rev. 22:7, 12, 20), **The Reapers** (Mt. 13:39-43; 24:31; Mk. 13:27), **The Wise and Foolish Virgins** (Mt. 25:1-13), **Waiting for His Son from Heaven** (I Thess. 1:9-10), **The Resurrection of the Dead** (Jn. 5:28-29), **The Judgment of the Wicked** (II Tim. 4:1; I Pet. 4:5; II Thess. 1:7-9).

On this wonderful theme there will be 13 to 16 powerful messages by men who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (**see list on page 15**), 12 to 15 personal testimonies, and at least three audience discussions, all placing emphasis upon that which is stressed in Scripture about Christ's coming. By the Lord's grace these gatherings will prove to be very profitable to the nourishment and sustaining of our faith.

Further Information

For more information about these meetings you may contact: Michael Blakely, 4437 Chatham Drive, Brownsburg, IN 46112-8531, (317) 293-9745. David Maddack's address and phone number are as follows: First Christian Church, 495 S. Indiana, Crown Point, IN 46307, (219) 663-1853.

We will supply more details as they become available to us. We urge all of our readers who are within travelling distance of these meetings to plan to be in attendance there this July. There is an abundance of available motels for overnight stays in neighboring Merrillville, Indiana. (**Motel information is on page 15.**) For those who would be flying into O Hare or Midway airports in Chicago, transportation will be provided to and from the airports by contacting David Maddack or the Banner editor (219) 769-7048. --*Editor*

Miscellaneous Observations and Reflections

With regard to God's Word, let us hear it as for eternity! --*Dan Powers*

There is nothing in the message of God that caters to flesh and blood. --*Fred O. Blakely*

Having removed our sin, God is now free to minister to us and use us. --*Gene Hutchcraft*

The Scripture places a high value on pureness of heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart" (Mt. 5:8). --*Leon Bates*

The strenuous nature of the life of faith requires that men have confidence in God. We have a strong and serious adversary. --*Given O. Blakely*

"The ways of the LORD are right, and the just (or, the justified ones) shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein" (Hos. 14:9).

Waiting in expectation is how we wait on the Lord: expecting Him to answer and perform that which we ask in accordance with His will. --*Debbie Hutchcraft*

When men and women possess faith, works of faith are but a natural occurrence. Consequently, where there are no evident works of faith in men, it demonstrates that they are dead unto God. --*Dan Powers*

The rich man in hell was still trying to "boss" Lazarus around in order to get what he wanted (cf. Lk. 16:24). Even there in the place of no hope, the rich man continued to reason as a natural man. --*Dean E. Boelt*

The Feast of Fat Things. "And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined" (Isa. 25:6). The feast of reference here is not in Mount Sinai, but rather in Mount Zion (cf. Heb. 12:18-22). The law demanded that the people supply the edibles for the feasts which were in that dispensation, and they were not to come empty-handed.

In this feast, however, mentioned here by the Prophet Isaiah, God has provided the "oxen" and the "fatlings" for men to feed upon, and He bids "all people" to come and partake of them freely. This feast involves the partakement of God Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ. Being reconciled to God through Christ Jesus enables men to be partakers of this delightful "dinner" (Mt. 22:4). We feast on Christ, the Lamb which God has provided for us, and we are restricted only by the measure of our faith. --*Dean E. Boelt*