

Articles by John Bramhall

John Bramhall

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An Incomparable Love

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John W. Bramhall

Mr. John W. Bramhall of Charlotte, N.C., shares with us some brief but blessed thoughts on Christ's incomparable love for His own.

"Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

The Gospel of John is divided into two great sections: the manifestation of Christ's glory to Israel from 1:19-12:50, to those who rejected Him (John 1:11); and the manifestation of His glory from 13:1-21:25, to those who received Him (John 1:12). How precious is the unfolding of the Lord's glory to those who have received Him, alone discernible to the eye and to the heart of faith. The entire portion reveals the Saviour's sacrificial love, His deepest humiliation, persecution, sorrow, pain and His ultimate death on behalf of "His own." It is blessed to belong to this great company called "His own." This last section of John's Gospel begins with the amazing revelation of HIS INCOMPARABLE LOVE!

Note the Time of It

It was "before the Feast of the Passover," the time when His own thoughts would be occupied with the sacred memories of this solemn feast (Ex. 12:14). It was also before His departure from this world when He could have been absorbed not only with His approaching death but with the joy of returning back to His Father in heaven above. It was before His great exaltation at the

right hand of God's throne and before His ultimate glory as Lord over all when He would be revealed in eternal splendor (Heb. 12:2). Yet none of these facts were able to separate His affections from "His own" whom He was about to leave on the earth.

Note the Reason for It

He Himself would soon be forever away from the world's hatred, its oppression and relentless antagonism that it had manifested against Him (John 15:18). But His disciples were to remain in the world and be exposed to its enmity, to be burdened with its oppression and trouble from which He was escaping. "The world hates you," said the Saviour to His disciples (John 15:19). The thought of their feeble and defenseless position, their sufferings and weaknesses and imperfections, only added fuel to His love for them. He felt and still feels for His own who are exposed to the world's pitiless hatred and opposition, for He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" according to Hebrews 4:15.

Note the Intensity of It

"He loved them to the end," that is, to the uttermost, with the highest possible degree, with a love that surpasses all knowledge (Eph. 3:19). His is a love that many waters are unable to quench (S. of Sol. 8:7). Did He love them to the last moment of His life? Yes, even more than that! It was a love without a beginning and a love without an end (Jer. 31:3). It now surpassed every previous demonstration; a love that now stooped down even unto the death of the cross for those who were "His own" (John 15:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16; etc.).

“To the end” does not fully express the complete thought. J. N. Darby has well written as follows: “To the end does not give the full force, for it makes it refer to time, whereas going through with everything is implied.” To paraphrase the precious truth, we can say: “He loved them through everything.” What can we say of all this? Alas! our hearts may grow cold toward Him, our hands may weary in well doing, our feet may wander; but of this fact we are assured — He will never fail us! His love will carry us and care for us “unto the end”; and at the end His love will receive us into His eternal home where there are no cold hearts, nor hands that hang down, nor feet that go astray. His love is an incomparable love! And in the words of J. N. Darby’s precious hymn, we can surely sing:

Oh, Jesus, Lord, who loved me like to Thee?

Fruit of Thy work, with Thee, too, there to see

Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll,

Myself the prize and travail of Thy soul.

Christian Bereavement

Christian Bereavement

John W. Bramhall

Bereavement is something that we all experience sooner or later in this life. In this article by Mr. John Bramhall of Charlotte, N.C., we are led to many comforting thoughts from the Word of God on this sobering theme. We are confident that these thoughts will prove helpful and instructive to all our readers.

Bereavement of loved ones comes to all families upon the earth, for no one is immune to death. It visits the home of the rich and the poor alike, for it is no respecter of persons. Yet the Christian circle is always in a position of positive triumph in the presence of death, for the Lord has changed everything for the believer. Let us turn to Scripture examples to find comfort in bereavement, noting how saints in the past faced this experience.

Jacob's Bereavement (Gen. 35:16-20)

Rachel died in giving birth to her second son. It was a great loss to Jacob, for she was his dearly loved wife. On her departure she named the child "Benoni," meaning "the son of my sorrow." Had Jacob accepted this name it would have reminded him for the rest of his life of the tragedy of his wife's death. This would have been very difficult for him to bear as a devoted husband. Instead, Jacob named him "Benjamin," which means "the son of my right hand," having found comfort and consolation in

the precious legacy the Lord had given him by Rachel. What an example!

David's Bereavement (2 Sam. 12:15-23)

The nameless child of Bathsheba was taken in death by God's decree on the father because of his sin. David earnestly prayed that the child might live and in his grief he prostrated himself on the ground before Jehovah. He refused all offers of food and encouragement, for his anguish was great. He felt the personal guilt of bringing this judgment upon the child. On the seventh day the child died and David's servants feared to tell the anguished father the truth. Nevertheless, he discerned by their actions what had happened. How did he react? He arose from the earth, washed himself, changed his raiment and entered into the house of the Lord. Yes, there was deep grief and God knew it, but in his nearness to God, David triumphed over his sorrow and worshipped. He comforted his heart with the thought, "I shall go to the child, but he shall not return unto me." The separation, he knew, was only temporary.

The Shunamite's Bereavement (2 Kings 4:17-37)

God gave the Shunamite woman a son because of her great kindness shown to Elisha the prophet. The parents joyfully watched the boy grow to youth; then one day he was taken ill, carried to his mother and laid in her lap until noon, and then died. What a terrible blow to his mother's heart! The child had been given to her in such sacred circumstances that it must have seemed unbelievable that he was dead. Hastening to the prophet

and leaving her boy lying on the bed, she met the servant of Elisha coming toward her. He enquired of her welfare, of her husband and of her child. She answered, "It is well." Yet her anguish was so great that the prophet perceived it as she held him by the feet (v. 27) and expressed her perplexity at such a tragic blow to her heart. The story ends with the miracle of the dead child being brought back to life (vv. 28-37), but the lesson for us to emphasize is her remarkable answer to Gehazi, Elisha's servant. When questioned regarding her welfare and that of the child's, she replied. "It is well." What an example of faith!

Job's Bereavement (Job 1:13-22) What a series of losses Job experienced! First, all of his possessions were taken away. Next, all of his sons and daughters were killed. What did Job do? "He arose, and shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshipped!" What did Job say? "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah hath taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah." How quickly some would have blamed God for the tragedy! But Job was a man in touch with God and uttered tremendously sublime words in the presence of terrible tragedies. Did God honor Job for his submission and trust? Read Job 42:12-17 to know his blessing.

Mary's Bereavement (John 19:35)

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother." Could any mother have deeper sorrow than Mary's when the Lord Jesus hung upon that cross of shame? Was not our blessed Lord then her "Benoni," that is, "the Son of my sorrow?" Had not the godly Simeon foretold, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also" (Luke 2:35)? Yet, the angel Gabriel had said to Mary, "He shall

be great, and shall be called the Son of the highest; and the Lord shall give Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

In her grief Mary could realize that the Lord was "Benjamin" to God, that is, "the Son of His right hand" (read Psalm 110). Mary was the one woman in all the world who had more joy out of her Son and at the same time more sorrow. Her case was definitely unique. Yet how sanctified was her grief as we think of the blessing that the unparalleled sorrows of the Lord have brought to multitudes of people. The pain of Mary's heart has been exceeded by the high honor that God has given to her Son. After all, God makes no mistakes, and when the sorrow of bereavement comes this fact can keep the heart in perfect peace. Mary bore her sorrow well and without doubt, for had not the angel Gabriel told her, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28)? Her deep sorrow was soon turned to utmost joy, and so shall ours!

Mary and Martha's Bereavement (John 11:1-44)

What a narrative of divine comfort and divine power is this story of Lazarus and his death! It is worthy of constant meditation, for the greatest Person within the story is the Lord Jesus Himself. Note the references to His Person: "Jesus heard" (v. 4); "Jesus loved" (v. 5); "Jesus answered" (v. 9); "Jesus spoke" (v. 13); and "Jesus came" (v. 17). But the greatest of all are the words, "Jesus wept" (v. 35). This last is the shortest verse in the English Bible, but it is of greatest comfort to a multitude

of sorrowing saints. He is still the same sympathetic Lord in our bereavement today, even though He is now in glory above. It has been well said: "There's not a sorrow rends the heart, but what the Man of Sorrows has a part." On the throne of His Father, He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" according to Hebrews 4:15. In the case of Lazarus, His word of power brought him back from the dead, returning him to the loving embrace of Lazarus' sorrowing sisters. What a miracle of divine power! Can He do the same for us?

Beloved, the Lord will indeed do the same for us. Very soon He will bring from among the dead all of our loved ones who have died and gone to be with Him. Then shall we be caught up together into a scene where there is no parting, no tears and no death. Hallelujah, and again hallelujah! "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

The Apostle Paul wrote: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:25). To this we say "Hallelujah!" "And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). And to this we again say, "Hallelujah!" Surely, to the bereaved heart of the Christian the Lord has given a note of eternal triumph so that "we sorrow not, even as others who have no hope." May we all triumph to His glory in our times of bereavement.

Jesus is coming! — sing the glad word!
Coming for those He redeemed by His blood,
Coming to reign as the glorified Lord!
Jesus is coming again!
Jesus is coming! the dead shall arise,
Loved ones shall meet in a joyful surprise,
Caught up together to Him in the skies:
Jesus is coming again.
Jesus is coming, is coming again!
Jesus is coming again!
Shout the glad tidings o'er mountain and plain!
Jesus is coming again!

Feeding Upon Christ (John 6:53-54)

Feeding Upon Christ (John 6:53-54)

John W. Bramhall

John W. Bramhall, a frequent contributor to Focus, makes his home in Charlotte, N.C. His article is a challenge to more fully feed on Christ in relation to all our Lord reveals Himself to be through His precious Word. As you read this helpful study, ask yourself to what extent you are feeding on Christ daily.

The historical background of John 6:53 & 54 is the miracle of our Lord feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes, one of the notable signs in John's Gospel proving the Messiahship and deity of Jesus. After His miracle the Saviour presented Himself as "the Bread of Life," the One Who alone can meet the spiritual need of the soul (see John 6:22-59). The character of the food for the soul He reveals in John 6:53 and 54: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink of His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

1. The Food Is Christ Himself. The words do not refer to the Lord's Supper but to the Person of Christ Himself. Note John 6:35, 48 and 51, where the Lord definitely speaks of Himself as "the bread of life" and "the living bread."

2. How Do We Feed on Christ? The Lord uses the terms of "eating" and "drinking," which speak symbolically of the soul appropriating and assimilating the Lord; it is

not a physical partaking. The soul needs spiritual food and Christ is “the bread of life” for the soul to feed on. Feeding upon Him must be personal, for none other can do it for me! It must be voluntary; it is not compulsory, as it must be my heart’s desire! It should be continual; a constant delight to my spiritual appetite! Also, it must be complete, that is, my soul should feed on all that Christ reveals Himself to be through His precious Word!

3. We Have Three Aspects of Christ to Feed upon. Our verses in John 6:53 and 54 reveal these to us, indicating three special characteristics of the Person of Christ as the food for the soul to enjoy. First, our food is:

An Incarnate Christ

“Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of Man.” His incarnation as Man is indicated by these words. Is it possible for us to absorb the full glory of His incarnation into our souls and comprehend the greatness of God being on earth in the flesh? Well has the Apostle Paul written: “Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). He also wrote: “For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). And it was the Apostle John who wrote: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...” (John 1:14). These Scriptures tell us that all the divine attributes of God dwelt in the Man Christ Jesus when He walked on the earth in the days of His earthly pilgrimage!

Here is much to feed upon! His perfect humanity was perfectly blended with His perfect deity! While clothed with the white raiment of His spotless humanity, nevertheless, the fulness of the Godhead shines gloriously through His humanity! He was “the effulgence

of God's glory and the expression of His substance" (Hebrews 1:3), while in the body of flesh He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). The divine glory did not obscure the human; and the human in no way impaired the divine! This is a blessed mystery for our hearts to ponder constantly and feed upon!

What grace, O Lord, and beauty

Shone around Thy steps below!

What patient love was seen in all

Thy life and death of woe!

By His incarnation, the incomprehensible God is translated into terms of human understanding. By it He reveals what man should be to God. By it He took upon Himself a body to make atoning sacrifice for our sins. By it He now is a merciful and faithful High Priest for us in Heaven. In it He will sit on the Throne of David. Wonder of all wonders — He came to be Man forever! All this, and more, is food for the soul.

Second, our food is:

A Crucified Christ

We feed upon His death. "Except ye drink His blood" imparts the wonder of His crucifixion to us. That death of deaths! It was predetermined "before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). It was foretold in type and shadow through the Old Testament; narrated historically in the four Gospels; repeatedly taught in the Epistles, and yet to be the eternal theme of Heaven's redeemed saints as written in Revelation 5:8-10. From eternity

past to eternity to come, the centrality of Christ's death is clearly revealed.

O mystery of mysteries!

Of life and death the tree!

Center of two eternities

Which look with rapt, adoring eyes,

Onward and back to Thee!

O Cross of Christ, where all His pain

And death — is our eternal gain.

What food for sinner and saint! "The Lord's death" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Truly, the soul that "eateth" and "drinketh" of Him "hath eternal life."

Finally, our food is:

A Resurrected Christ

We feed upon a Christ exalted and glorified. That is why He said, "I will raise him up at the last day." What a promise! Nay, what an assurance! Because He lives, we shall live also. We delight to sing of Him and His resurrection:

Low in the grave He lay—

Jesus, my Saviour!

Waiting the coming day—

Jesus, my Lord!

Death could not keep its prey—

Jesus, my Saviour!

He tore the bars away—

Jesus, my Lord!

We rejoice to sing that “Up from the grave He arose...” Yet, hallelujah, so shall we arise. Death and the grave can never hold us, for as we rise to meet the Lord in the air we shall at that moment triumphantly sing, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55). He lives today as our Intercessor; our Great High Priest; our Advocate; the coming Saviour-King to claim His own; to enter into the glory of His kingdom; to ultimately consummate all His Father’s purposes and bring the redeemed into the eternal new creation. Our souls can feed upon the glorified, resurrected, soon-coming Person Who will raise all of His own “at the last day,” to be forever with Him. The future before us has more food for the soul to imbibe than there is capacity to contain. What a feast for the saints!

What exhaustless food we have for our souls to enjoy! We feed upon His life! We feed upon His death! And we feed upon His glory! Let us hear His voice saying to us today, “Eat, oh friends: drink, yea, drink abundantly, beloved ones” (Song of Solomon 5:1, J.N.D. translation).

Guide us, O Thou gracious Saviour,
Pilgrims through this barren land;
We are weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold us with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of Heaven!
Feed us now and evermore.

Four Features of a Believer

Four Features of a Believer

John Bramhall

One of the great joys of David's life was the momentous occasion when the Ark of God was brought back to its resting place in Jerusalem. It inspired a song of thanksgiving from the heart of the sweet singer of Israel as the whole city reverberated with holy joy. Toward the end of the song, David described four features that may be applied to all young believers of our day. He says, "Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to Thy holy name and glory in Thy praise." (1 Chronicles 16:35).

Salvation

is the first Characteristic feature: "Save us, O God of our salvation." We are a saved people. Salvation is the foundation of every thing to us for time and eternity. Salvation is a word of broad meaning in Scripture, but let us now consider that God's salvation is a deliverance from every peril that could threaten us, whether in the past, present, or future.

Our past deliverance is by the death of Christ. When we trusted Him and His finished work of the Cross, that moment the sins of the past were forgiven. Our penalty, death (Romans 6:23), was forever removed (John 5:24), our fear of hell was gone (Psalm 40:3), and our guilty conscience was purged (Hebrews 9:14). We now look

back to Calvary by faith and through His death can say that we have been saved.

Our present deliverance is by the priesthood of Christ. As our Great High Priest in Heaven, He succors us by His present intercessory work. We also have the Holy Spirit of God, as our indwelling Comforter within our hearts, and the Word of God, as our counsellor and guide. Thus our God by the priesthood of Christ, with the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, has provided us with present power for deliverance from our threefold enemy: the world, the flesh and the Devil. We are being saved.

Our future deliverance is by the coming of Christ. Blessed be His Name! Our complete deliverance will be effected, spirit, soul and body, at His return. Surely, young believer, ours is a blessed hope. We shall be saved.

Association

is the second characteristic feature, for the passage says, "Gather us together." It is not for isolation but for holy association that our God has sent the Holy Spirit from Heaven, so that His people may be gathered together, forming the Body of Christ.

This heavenly association, formed by the Spirit of God at Pentecost, unites eternally every believer with Christ the Head in Heaven and also with every member. The Cross is the foundation of this heavenly people for, through the work of Christ at Calvary, God has made the One New Man. (Ephesians 2:13-16). To maintain this fellowship with Him and with one another, we must obey His word in the sevenfold spirit of lowliness, meekness, long-

suffering, forbearance, love, diligence and peace. (Eph. 4:3-6).

Separation

is the third characteristic, suggested by the words, “Deliver us from the heathen.” God’s protection for Israel depended upon their separation from the nations around them, never upon their federation with them. This principle is to govern us today as His people.

Through the guidance of the Spirit of God and His Word, we are to be separated from all moral and doctrinal evil and all unequal yokes. Though we are in the world we should not be of it.

A positive emphasis upon this truth demands that we be separated unto the Father, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, in order to enjoy the love of the Father. (2 Corinthians 6:18-7:1). We are to be separated unto Jesus also, taking our place with Him in His rejection. “Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” (Heb. 13:13).

Our separation should have the testimony of this twofold character—separated from evil and separated unto the Father and the Son—to maintain a Scriptural testimony for the glory of God.

Adoration

is the final characteristic feature that we will notice, “that we may give thanks to Thy Holy Name and glory in Thy praise.” God’s purpose and desire for us is to make us a worshipping people, offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name. Heb. 13:15.

One essential of Christian worship is that we worship the Father. To the woman at the well, the Lord Jesus said, "The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him." (John 4:23). Since, through His beloved Son, God is known by us as Father, in the joy of our Salvation, Association and Separation, our hearts should be exclaiming, "Abba, Father, we adore Thee!" The Divine objective in saving us, gathering us and separating us is that eternally with Himself we shall fill the universe to come with our endless praises unto the Father.

May God, by our yielding to the Holy Spirit, manifest these marks of Divine glory upon our features even now, for His Name's sake!

God Our Sanctuary

God Our Sanctuary

John W. Bramhall

Mr. John W. Bramhall of Charlotte, N C, is an octogenarian who continues to faithfully serve the Lord in both a Bible teaching and writing ministry.

“Yet I will be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come” (Ezek. 11:16) was a very special promise for very special times, given to the faithful of God’s people in Israel during their captivity long ago. Its truth was proved by some faithful few and has today a spiritual parallel for God’s faithful followers living near the end of this age.

Consider first:

The Circumstances of the Promise

One hundred years before, the ten tribes of Israel had been scattered and taken into Assyrian captivity. Judah and Benjamin were left in the land, but notwithstanding the object lesson of divine judgment on the ten tribes, again and again they went astray, lapsing deeply into idolatry until at last Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, ultimately destroying the city and temple, and taking away captive the majority of the people.

Three outstanding men of God, Daniel, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, are prominent on the pages of divine history during that period of captivity. Daniel the prince, in Babylon; Ezekiel the priest, at the River Chebar in Assyria; and Jeremiah the prophet, remaining in the midst of the corruption and apostasy at Jerusalem. The

Shekinah glory of the Lord was removed from God's holy dwelling place at Jerusalem, his house left desolate and the sanctuary forsaken by Him (see Ezek. 9-11).

Second, observe:

The Nature of the Promise

Though the symbol of God's presence had been removed, He gave His people this new promise; "Although I have removed them far off among the nations, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries whither they are come" (JND New Trans.). God Himself promised to be a sanctuary to the faithful remnant, a promise that exactly suited the scattered and faithful saints of the captivity.

Daniel, the prince, in the midst of imperial Babylon proved it to be blessedly true. God was his sanctuary. Ezekiel, the priest, at the River Chebar experienced the same. God was his sanctuary. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, at Jerusalem in the midst of its corruption, with the house of God degraded and the nation demoralized and apostate, also proved that God was his sanctuary. Daniel was far from Jerusalem; Ezekiel was a lonely captive by the River Chebar; and Jeremiah was suffering for his testimony in the centre of Jerusalem's corrupted apostasy. Nevertheless, each proved the truth of God's promise.

Finally, note:

The Spiritual Application Today

We live in a world that is still like imperial Babylon of old; we are in it and cannot get out of it but, oh, to live

in it like Daniel, to live like he did before those who hate our God and Christ, and hate us! Yet to live so that the world finds no flaws or charges against us, except in the law of our God (see Dan. 6:5).

We need to be like Ezekiel, a different type from Daniel, but having visions of God in the quietness of his captivity; periods alone with God, waiting upon him for the revelations of His precious truth to our souls.

Ezekiel not only saw a vision of the departure of God's glory from the temple, but in prophetic vision he also saw the returning glory (see Ezek. 40-48).

How we need to be a weeping Jeremiah in these days, not facing the world as a man of affairs as Daniel did, nor perhaps in the quietness of God's presence as Ezekiel, but to be a saint that will weep in godly sorrow, on bended knee and with broken heart, because of the corruptions manifested in the outward Christian testimony today, seeking to win back the people of God to the simplicity and Scriptural path from which many have strayed.

In these days of increasing apostasy, departure from God, and corruption of doctrine, faith will receive the blessing when leaning wholly on this special promise God has given for such special times like ours today — "I will be to thee a little sanctuary." May our Lord, by His Spirit, help us to prove it until the Lord Jesus returns.

God's Light In Days of Difficulty --Part 1

God's Light In Days of Difficulty

Part 1

John W. Bramhall

Light for the path can only be given to us by God (1 John 1:5). In every age God has given light to His people, specific counsel suitable for each period. When they walked in His light they overcame their difficulties; but when they refused, failure resulted and they were in darkness. In the confusion today, rather than being indifferent, we should understand the light that God has given to preserve us. His method has been to give ONE LEADING TRUTH for each period, sufficient light to guide and to preserve His people. Consider some examples from the Scriptures:

ADAM (Genesis 2:15-17): The counsel given to Adam in the garden of Eden was sufficient to guide and preserve him from the guile of the serpent. Failure and ruin followed when Eve listened and assented to the denial of God's words—"In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Obedience would have overcome the suggestions of Satan; this can not be denied! Satan knew this so well that his scheme was to pervert God's Word, deny its truthfulness and deprive his victim of all power to see or to preserve the right path. Adam and Eve refused God's counsel and were led into darkness. God's instructions would have effectually guided them safely through the testing for this was His special counsel at the time.

NOAH (Genesis 9:1-17): In Noah's day God gave two special lines of counsel. (a) He was to occupy a place of superiority over all the earth. Everything was placed under his dominion in order to govern the earth for God—"Into YOUR hand are they delivered"—verses 1-7. (b) God also gave the sign of His covenant—verses 8-17. "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." Here we find two lines of instruction to guide and to preserve Noah and his sons in their day through all the difficulties. If they maintained it they would find light to escape from the perils; if not, they must be overcome and lose ground.

Noah's failure, and his son's, was evidenced when Noah himself was overcome by wine and when his son showed insubjection and disrespect (Genesis 9:20-27). The ultimate failure consummated at the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9) in complete disregard to God's counsel. God gave unqualified supremacy and authority for men to govern the earth; and His link and covenant was the centralization of it. No other counsel could preserve them in the time they lived. The first indication of departure was Noah himself; then the failure which followed was climaxed by the organized rebellion at the tower of Babel. The failure can only be attributed to the unfortunate neglect of THE COUNSEL OF GOD.

ABRAHAM (Genesis 12:1-3): The counsel that God gave Abraham was brief but definite. God called him to walk a separated path from the idolatrous world around. His obedience always secured blessing and deliverance; the neglect of it invariably involved him in sorrow and perplexity. He fulfilled God's counsel in Genesis 12:5; then departed from it to go into Egypt (Genesis

12:10-20). He was victorious in the case of Lot (ch.13). He undoubtedly taught Isaac the counsel of God; but his descendants neglected it. Isaac was self-indulgent (Genesis 27:1-4); Jacob was self-willed (Genesis ch. 29 through 31). The sons of Jacob were rebellious (Genesis ch. 34 and 37) and eventually the posterity of Jacob had so neglected God's counsel that they were obliged, because of grievous famine, to leave the land of Canaan and go down into Egypt.

MOSES AND JOSHUA (Exodus 3:8-10; Joshua 1:1-10): God gave Moses a promise—"I am come down" etc. and a command—"bring my people out of Egypt" etc. This was God's call and His light for their path in that day; His mind and will for His people. When Moses walked according to it he was successful and above the difficulties of that time. When he swerved from it, for any cause, be it personal incompetence, the unbelief of the people, the power of Egypt, etc.—in proportion as he swerved from it, or hesitated, he failed. Eventually, the people murmured and were even destroyed. Refusing the counsel of God they were condemned to wander in the wilderness forty years until all the men had died (Numbers 14:22-38).

God's counsel was committed to Joshua (Joshua 1:1-10) and was virtually the same as given to Moses. He was called to be strong and very courageous in completing what Moses had not finished (Joshua 1:9). In Joshua chapter 23, before his death, Joshua repeated the counsel of God to the judges and officers of Israel. Only by observing the COMPLETE counsel of God that had been given to Moses could the possession of Canaan be enjoyed—(Joshua 23:6). ALAS! how incomplete this was can be learned from the record in the book of Judges

(Judges 2:1-4 etc.). As Israel's history continued through the days of the Judges; through the history of their Kings; and later through the days of their prophets, what was the outcome? In spite of occasional blessings through David, Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah and Daniel, etc.—they greatly neglected the counsel of God for their day!

Though the prophets endeavoured to lead God's people back into line with God's counsel time and time again, yet the Old Testament closes with the sad evidence of moral insensibility existing and prevailing in Israel. The failure of the nation is graphically portrayed in the closing book of the Old Testament by the prophet Malachi! "Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against Thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered" (Malachi 3:13-15).

Let us summarize at this point some lessons from the history of God's people in the past periods. We can recognize an obvious principle for our present day. It is this—we are warned and assured that there must be **FOR US IN OUR DAY** some simple but definite counsel from God, which, if we will observe, would guide and help us through all our difficulties. On the contrary, if His counsel is neglected and refused, we can but be exposed to the confusion and defeat that prevails around. If we will learn that God has certain fixed principles in His ways and government; and that **HE WILL NOT DEVIATE FROM HIS DIVINE**

INSTRUCTIONS TO HIS PEOPLE, nor can He; for it would be contrary to His moral character; if we will learn this truth in our hearts, it will prove great gain!

These examples from the Old Testament should conclusively prove to us that God ALWAYS gives a counsel suitable for the times His people live in. When we face confusion and the powerlessness to escape from our difficulties in the testimony of the Church, the fact can be traced to our neglect of HIS counsel. A very simple question would be proper to raise and ask ourselves, which is—"WHAT IS THE LEADING COUNSEL OF GOD GIVEN FOR US IN THIS AGE: AND WHAT IS HIS LIGHT FOR THOSE WHO WOULD WALK ACCORDING TO IT?" There is no question of God's insufficiency, that HE would fail to give the light upon the path which we need in these dark, apostate days of our history. For "God is light, and in HIM is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

"OUR GOD IS LIGHT: AND THOUGH WE GO
ACROSS A TRACKLESS WILD,
OUR SAVIOUR'S FOOTSTEPS EVER SHEW
THE PATH FOR EVERY CHILD"

God's Light In Days of Difficulty --Part 2

God's Light In Days of Difficulty

Part 2

John W. Bramhall

We now consider the New Testament teaching of God's counsel to His people. First in order is -

JOHN THE BAPTIST (Matthew 3: 1-12): As the fore-runner of the Messiah, his ministry to Israel was different from preceding times. The heart of his message was condensed by his command, "REPENT YE for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:12). His work was to prepare the way for the King and His kingdom (Matthew 3:3) by baptism unto repentance, so that the nation would be morally ready for His appearing. Those who accepted his message were blest, but the rejectors were condemned. "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29, 30). It was God's leading counsel for His people at that period.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (John 1:1-13): When Christ came from heaven to earth, then the fulness of divine light appeared to man. He was "the true Light" that shone in the darkness and yet "the darkness comprehended it not" (John 1:5). Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world" (John 8:12). With such a light what other counsel could be the guide for God's people in that

day? The past counsels of God would be unsuitable when the Son of God Himself was on earth in person. The Father's voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him" (Matthew 17:5). Those who heard and received Him, "to them gave He power to become the sons of God, etc" (John 1:12, 13).

Each one who followed Him and acknowledged Him (the Simeons, the Annas, the disciples, the faithful women, etc.) did not walk in darkness but had "the light of life." They knew His doctrine that it was of God (John 7:17). Every one who rejected Him, He could but declare words of judgment upon them, saying, "If ye believe not that I am HE, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). What was the ultimate result? It became the darkest night in Israel's history when the nation cried, "Away with Him! crucify Him! (John 19:15). The crucifixion of their Messiah was the greatest tragedy in all the history of Israel. The rejection of the greatest Light produced the beginning of the greatest night for His earthly people. What a long night it has been! It is all summarized by the sad words of John 1:11, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

Yet there is one great outstanding truth that continues to remain, in spite of the rejection of the Messiah by Israel. God has no other channel of divine counsel but His beloved Son to this world; for "God hath in these last days spoken unto us in the person of His Son" (Hebrews 1:2). The Risen, Glorified Lord in heaven, remains the channel of God's communication to His people on the earth; He still is God's voice to all. God's counsel must now come from the glory and it is different to what it was when Christ lived on the earth. Christ's relationship

to the earth has been changed and therefore His counsel to His people must change accordingly; also, the relationship of His people is now to One Who is in heaven above - the Man in the glory! The change of His people's relationship toward Him now is readily perceived between the Risen Lord and devoted Mary Magdalene as recorded in John 20:11-18. Because of this we are compelled to acknowledge that our Risen Lord in heaven above, He alone must be the guide and the counsel of God to His people on the earth. This will be seen as we follow through the New Testament.

GOD'S COUNSEL FROM THE RISEN CHRIST (Acts 1:1 thru 7:60): From the time of His ascension to the death of Stephen, God's leading counsel to Israel was determined by the position of Christ in glory. From heaven above Christ offered Himself to Israel, for the apostles testified that "the times of refreshing" were to come from the presence of the Lord and that God would "send Jesus Christ, which was preached unto you." Read Acts 3:19-26 and note verses 19-20. The apostles preached this according to God's mind at the time. God had raised Jesus from the dead and made Him both "Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). He was the One Who could bring in "the sure mercies of David" and until the Lord was rejected in His Resurrection, God offered the Kingdom to Israel.

Though the Church was already formed, yet the apostles were in harmony with God's will and counsel for that day, for until Christ was rejected by Israel in His Resurrection God was offering to them the Kingdom. The readiness of Christ to come is indicated by His position in heaven above, as Stephen, "being filled with the Holy Ghost, looked steadfastly up into heaven, and

saw the glory of God, AND JESUS STANDING ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD" (Acts 7:55, 56).

The defense of Stephen before the rulers of Israel in Acts chapter 7 was virtually a recital of Israel's history of rejection to God's counsel through the ages past, being culminated by the fearless words of God's faithful servant in verse 51: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did so do ye." So once again Stephen, under God, accused the leaders of the nation of rejecting the counsel of God but this time from Christ in glory. Their rejection became conclusive by their violent and deliberate stoning of God's faithful servant as they, "when they heard these things, were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth" (Acts 7:54). How tragic and significant is the divine record of this culminating event as recorded in Acts 7:57, 58: "Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul." So Stephen, while looking for Christ to come from the glory, when being stoned to death, learns by the Spirit that there was a place for him now with Christ in glory!

This concludes the testimony of that day, that Christ ascended on high was offering to return to the earth, and according to this counsel for that day, the saints were looking to Him, the ascended One and expecting Him to come and reign. Hence, Christ is no longer offering Himself to them as He was then when standing at the right hand of God. From henceforth we find that He is sitting down, but though the counsel of God

subsequently is a different one, nevertheless it is connected with our Lord Jesus Christ in the glory as we shall see. God has no other channel of communication to His people but the One Who is now seated on His right hand above. It is significant that as Stephen was stoned — “the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul.” The next counsel of God to His people for our present age, was communicated to this young man when the Christ of glory revealed Himself to him at his conversion on the Damascus road. Saul is called by the Lord Jesus from the glory to be a “minister and a witness of those things which he had seen and of those things in the which the Lord would appear to him” (Acts 26:16). The leading counsel and truth for us today we shall take up in our next paper, our relationship to THE MAN IN THE GLORY.

“I was journeying in the noontide,
When His light shone o’er my road;
And I saw Him in that glory—
Saw Him—Jesus, Son of God.
All around in noonday splendour,
Earthly scenes lay fair and bright:
But my eyes no more behold them
For the glory of that Light!
Marvel not that Christ in glory
All my inmost heart hath won;
Not a star to cheer my darkness,
But a light beyond the sun.

All below lies dark and shadowed,
Nothing there to claim my heart,
Save the lonely track of sorrow
Where of old He walked apart.
All the wonders of His glory,
Deeper wonders of His love -
How for me He won, He keepeth
That high place in heaven above;
Not a glimpse - the veil uplifted -
But within the veil to dwell,
Gazing on HIS FACE for ever,
Hearing words unspeakable.
I have seen the Face of Jesus -
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have heard the Voice of Jesus -
All my soul is satisfied.
In the radiance of the glory
First I saw His blessed Face,
And for ever shall that glory
Be my home, my dwelling place."

God's Light In Days of Difficulty --Part 3

God's Light In Days of Difficulty

Part 3

John W. Bramhall

We now consider the leading counsel of God for the present day. When Christ was glorified as MAN in heaven, His relationship to earth was changed. Of necessity the counsel of God for His people likewise changed. In their relationship, God's people are now united to the MAN IN THE GLORY, for God does not speak to us through any other person but the Person of His Beloved Son (Hebrews 1:1-3). For this reason, Saul of Tarsus, later called Paul, was apprehended by the Lord of Glory Himself on the Damascus road to be His chosen vessel of divine communication to the Church today. His unique conversion, different in circumstances to others, was for a specific purpose which the apostle later declared in Acts 26:16 as a twofold objective:

1. To be "a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen."
2. "AND of those things in the which I will appear unto thee."

The appearance of the glorified Lord to Paul emphasizes an essential truth we have lost sight of today, THAT CHRIST IN GLORY IS THE SOURCE AND SPRING OF ALL BLESSING TO HIS PEOPLE! He is "HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH WHICH IS HIS BODY" (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18). Though

we have other important doctrines in the New Testament, this one is the leading truth of God's counsel for us today — THE HEADSHIP OF CHRIST. His preeminence in this relationship to His people is of paramount importance. Its truth directs us into two lines of responsibility:

1. Our Personal Responsibility Toward the Headship of Christ

This has been exemplified in the Apostle Paul's experience. Upon his conversion, the Christ of glory was not only revealed to him as Saviour, but also as LORD!! At once Paul grasped the truth that Christ was the Head of His body of people on earth. This he demonstrated as he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). The realization of it brought full submission to the One Who has supreme authority over His people. It enabled him from that moment to faithfully press toward the ultimate goal during his whole Christian testimony on earth (see Philippians 3:14).

Is not this the leading truth for each believer to obey today? Our obedience to the Lordship of Christ will enable us to walk through this scene of difficulty in HIS strength, in HIS power and in blessed harmony with the Spirit of God and the Word God! It is most unfortunate today that God's leading counsel, for the greater part, is conspicuously absent amongst us! Would present day confusion and divided opinions prevail if each believer was wholly submissive to the Headship of Christ? The clear responsibility for each of us is to "walk by the same rule" and "mind the same thing" (Philippians 3:15). Outward evidence today would indicate that as it was in the closing days of the Judges, so it is today—

“every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25), rather than “in the eyes of the Lord.” The leading counsel of God for this age has not changed, nor will it, until the Lord comes for His own! Regardless of what other believers may do, each believer is still responsible to the Lord above as an individual. With yielded hearts and wills we should say, “LORD, what wilt THOU have me to do?”

2. Our Corporate Responsibility Toward the Headship of Christ

The complete New Testament revelation of the Headship of Christ was communicated to Paul in accordance with the Lord’s promise that He would minister “those things in which I will appear unto thee” (Acts 26:16). None can question the fact that all corporate truth regarding the Church has been given to us through the writings of Paul. It clearly places each assembly in direct responsibility to the Head in heaven above; to administrate and carry out the complete teaching of God’s Word in respect to the functions of Christ’s assembly on the earth. Nothing must be added; nor anything deleted from what the Word reveals our responsibility to be to the Head in heaven above! For the revelation of Church truth is complete; Paul has declared “ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD:” To the Ephesian elders Paul said, “I have not shrunk from announcing to you ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD” (Acts 20:27, JND)’ To the Colossians he wrote, “Now, I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the assembly; of which I became a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me towards

you TO COMPLETE THE WORD OF GOD” (Colossians 1:24,25, JND). The last revealed truth to mankind in the Word of God is His truth concerning the Church, and which was entrusted to the Apostle Paul to reveal to us. It is that great “mystery ... which has not been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed” (read Ephesians 3:1-10).

The observation of corporate conditions today indicates that the Headship of Christ over His people is not a living reality! The doctrine is often mentioned by some, yet not practiced. It is unimportant to others and totally disregarded by many. If this leading truth were realized in proper measure, we would find that God’s counsel for us today would effectively help solve difficulties and enable us to be superior over the hindrances we face. We confess that the increasing confusion and chaos in the corporate character of the divine testimony on earth gives unmistakable evidence that for the larger part, the Headship of Christ is not honoured!

The drifting of the Colossian believers into Judaism and human philosophy was by Paul attributed to their failure in “not holding fast the head, from WHOM all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God” (Colossians 2:19, JND). See also Ephesians 4:15, 16. The carnality of the Corinthian believers can also be attributed to their disobedience to this same leading truth — the Lordship of Christ. Paul, prior to his departure, wrote, “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me” (2 Timothy 1:15). Today, what would he say but his words recorded in Acts 27:21, “Ye should have hearkened unto me”? The churches of Asia, in Revelation 2 and 3, in some

particular way lost sight of Christ, and drifted away from His Headship and authority; then failed!

If Christ IS our Head in heaven, then each assembly should seek to faithfully maintain this relationship in practical obedience. Our ministry for Him on the earth should BEGIN in the glory where He now is! Our service, in its planning and directing, seems to originate from ourselves rather than from HIM above! We may be devoted and truehearted in our efforts, but either through ignorance or neglect toward our HEAD in heaven, we go about our service in OUR way and not in HIS way! All the assembly activity of worship and service should be wholly under the control of our living Head in heaven above!

Our responsibility toward God's leading counsel still remains the same until our Lord comes again. Let us realize this. If we will devotedly adhere to this paramount fact of His Headship over us, we shall be sustained by Him, through His Spirit and His Word; and we shall keep in fellowship with our Head in heaven above. Through this we shall have the strength, the grace and the wisdom of our Lord that will enable us to prove in experience that we seek to follow GOD'S LIGHT IN DAYS OF DIFFICULTY! Would it not be a blessed delight to hear Him say to us when He comes, "Thou hast kept My Word, and hast not denied MY NAME!" (Revelation 3:8)? God grant that this will be our desire and the determination of our whole beings!

God's Three Greatest Gifts

God's Three Greatest Gifts

John Bramhall

God is the greatest Giver in the universe! And out of the greatness of His loving heart, He freely offers the greatest of His gifts to mankind.

Any human endeavour to merit these gifts is folly, and only reveals man's unworthiness to receive them. They are free, and must be accepted as His gifts of sovereign grace.

Although God has given many gifts to men, all good and perfect gifts (Jas. 1:17), three of His greatest are of particular interest at this season of the year.

His Son

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

None but the Father is able to reveal the greatness of the Son of God, and this He has done in Hebrews 1:1-6, where He presents to us seven of the supernal glories of Christ.

He is the future Ruler of the universe — "the appointed Heir of all things." He is to be a universal Potentate, with the heavens and earth under His rule. This is the Father's declared purpose: to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth; even in Him" (Eph. 1.10).

He is the past Creator of the universe — “by whom also He made the worlds.” The chief agent of Creation is Christ the Son, “for by Him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him” (Col. 1:16).

He is the eternal Son of the Highest, very God Himself — “being the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance” (J. N. D. Trans.). He possesses every divine attribute of God’s moral glory and being.

He is the Sustainer of the universe — “upholding all things by the word of His power.” He holds the mighty universes together, for “He is before all, and all things subsist together by Him” (Col. 1:17, J. N. D. Trans.). Every atom is in His mighty control, “In Him, all things hold together” (Confraternity Trans.).

He is the great Sin-Purger — “When He had by Himself purged our sins.” The greatness of sin in God’s moral universe He alone could put away to the infinite satisfaction of a holy God, and this He did! “But now once in the end of the ages hath He appeared to PUT AWAY SIN by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26). How great is God’s gift of His Son!

He is the exalted Man in the glory of Heaven — for He “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” The pinnacle of universal glory is His portion right now! Men gave Him a crown of thorns and a cross! The Father has given Him a crown of glory and a throne! (Heb. 2:9).

He is the coming Saviour-King — He must and will return to earth for, “When He again bringeth in the Firstborn

into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him” (Heb. 1:6, A.S.V.).

This One is God’s great gift to the world, “that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have EVERLASTING life.” Great and eternal are the blessings for all who trust Him.

Accept the Gift and thank the Giver! “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2 Cor. 9:15).

His Spirit

“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

The greatest deed of infamy ever perpetrated by humanity was soon followed by another great heavenly gift, the Holy Spirit of God. Although, according to human reasoning, the slaying of the sinless Son of God on the cross might have been followed by sudden and eternal destruction from above, yet the God of mercy and grace continued to prove His great love to mankind by the sending of His Spirit. Within 50 days of Christ’s crucifixion, the Spirit of God descended from Heaven, thus fulfilling the promise of the Father and of the Son (John 14:16, 17, 26; 16:7).

God the Father, the omnipresent One (Eph. 4:6) is, as to His abode, in Heaven (Matt. 6:9). God the Son, likewise, though omnipresent (Matt. 18:20), is, as to His abode now, seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3; 10:12). BUT, the Holy Spirit, also omnipresent, is, as to His abode, now dwelling here on the earth since the day of Pentecost.

Two specific revelations concerning His present abode in the world are taught in the New Testament. In a

corporate aspect, He tabernacles in a structure of living stones (believers in the Lord Jesus Christ), making them the present habitation of God (Eph. 2:18-22; 4:13-16). In an individual aspect, He dwells in every child of God (1 Cor. 6:19). Blessed condescension of God to send from above His Spirit to indwell His people — the greatest gift from above now upon the earth!

His Word

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). An infallible Book from the hand of God! A divine library of 66 books; yet one volume written by about 40 different men over a period of 1600 years. Nevertheless, it has a perfect continuity of historical sequence from the creation in Genesis to the new heavens and earth in Revelation.

This supernatural Book reveals the Person and the glory of God’s Son (2 Cor. 3:18). Its supreme purpose is to make us wise unto salvation, that the child of God may be complete (2 Tim. 3:14-17). What a glorious gift; what a majestic Giver!

As with the first two gifts, this one also is to be found within our hearts (Eph. 3:17. Gal. 4:6. Psa. 119:11), and is likewise offered by God “without money and without price.”

It is through His Word that the sinner is born again (1 Pet. 1:23). Only through feeding on the Word can the child of God hope to grow in the Christian life (1 Pet. 2:2). Furthermore, it is the purpose and work of Christ to sanctify and cleanse His Church by the washing of water by the Word. (Eph. 5:26).

Take these three great gifts of God without delay if you have never yet done so. Then may the possession of God's Son, God's Spirit, and God's Word fill your heart with joy unspeakable both now and throughout life's journey, to the praise and glory of our God and Saviour!

God's Voice in National Peril

God's Voice in National Peril

John Bramhall

John Bramhall of Charlotte, N.C. provides the assemblies of God's people with both oral and written ministry. This article ministers comfort, counsel and encouragement for God's people today. This surely is a message relevant to our times.

One of the bravest, tenderest and most pathetic characters in history was the Prophet Jeremiah. Everyone should read his great prophecy, for there is a strong similarity between the world of today and the fateful days of Jeremiah. For the greater part, his ministry was during the most tragic time of Judah's history, the reign of its last five kings. He was the prophet of Judah's midnight hour. Today we are nearing the most tragic time of world history for the midnight hour is near. The second coming of Christ is at hand, the time when God's destructive and conclusive judgments will fall on a sin-loving and Christ-rejecting world — read Revelation 14:14-20.

The Prophet's Character:

Jeremiah possessed outstanding characteristics:

(a) Suffering sympathy shown in two directions. A sympathy for God such as few men possessed, for he entered into the life of Jehovah. He not only spoke for God but he felt with God (Jer. 7:3; 20:9). He also had a yearning, grieving and loving sympathy for his fellowmen which made him suffer with them. He not

only spoke to the people but also felt with them (Jer. 9:1; Lam. 2:11; 3:48), yet he never failed to identify himself with God in his judgments (Lam. chap. 2).

(b) Patient perseverance, a pure love and devotion that carried him through such a disappointing ministry. Many prophets had a measure of success but Jeremiah never saw any response and gratitude. He was unheeded and humiliated, but bravely persistent (Jer. 20:7-9). “Love suffereth long, and is kind ... beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (1 Cor. 13). What an example of the persevering love of God was Jeremiah!

(c) Firm faithfulness, though his sensitive nature shrank from pronouncing the fearful retribution of God upon the people, yet he steadfastly continued with heroic faithfulness right to the end. Faithful to God and His people, though they were adamant in refusing God’s message through His servant. Read Jeremiah Chap. 42 through 44.

The Prophet’s Message:

This was one of emphasis, solemnity and tragedy, revealing that all of Judah’s deterioration and disaster was fundamentally caused by the nation disregarding and disobeying GOD.

(a) Three specific cases: First it is seen in the spiritual breakdown of the men who were the leaders of the nation (Jer. 2:8). Second, the result then produced in the whole nation, a condition of wickedness and bitterness (Jer. 2:19). The last is the complete blindness of the people to sin. Sin ceases to be recognized as such and Innocence is professed in the midst of moral defilement

(Jer. 2:35). Is there not a similar moral blindness pervading the world today? When moral declension sets in, the momentum increases rapidly and the wrong that is indulged in by leaders of the nation will become the fashion of the people.

(b) Three tragic actions: First, King Jehoiakim himself burns the message from God (Jer. Chap. 35). Second, the princes of Judah cast God's servant into a dungeon (Jer. Chap. 38). Third, the whole nation becomes deaf to all the words of God spoken by Jeremiah (Jer. Chap. 37:2). Nations and people who dishonor God by denying Him, if unrepentant, will degenerate into defying Him. The same tragedy is being enacted today before our eyes.

(c) Judah's lamentable condition was definitely the result of the people's apostasy from the true God. "They have forsaken Me the fountain of living water" (Jer. 2:13; 17:3). So today, the basic foundation of national and international problems is explained in three words, God is Forgotten. Politicians flounder over secondary causes, discussing Policy and never seeking to Forsake Sin! (Prov. 13:34). The world's history, as written by men, has never been accurate and will not be because God is left out of the Record. The ultimate result of this is stated in Psalm 9:17. Nevertheless, God's voice still speaks to us today.

God's Voice in Days of National Peril (Jer. 9:23)

He is heard speaking in three specific directions: (a) To the Wise of earth, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom." (b) To the Powerful of earth, "Let not the mighty man glory in his might." (c) To the Wealthy of earth, "Let not the rich man glory in his riches."

The three greatest possessions that men esteem and proudly boast in are completely discounted by God: earthly wisdom, earthly power and earthly wealth. Yet the whole world of mankind outside of Christ is basing the solution of their problems upon these three things which can but fail.

Study carefully the contrast of man's wisdom with God's wisdom as recorded by the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 1:19 through 1 Cor. 2:16). "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." It may seem a strange forecast, hut according to the Word of God the wisdom of this world will some day collapse in Utter Failure.

Examine the fourth chapter of Daniel and read how God brought down from his pinnacle of power and boasting the greatest of all Gentile Kings, Nebuchednezzar. Poor puny man, building up an empire of power which will be broken "with a rod of iron" and dashed "in pieces like a potter's vessel." See Psalm 2. Daniel 2:29 through 35.

Read the parable of the Rich Fool in Luke 12:16-21 and realize the uncertainty of riches for all men (1 Tim. 6:17). Also read James 5:1-5 and see the coming day of judgment upon the economic structure of the nations. Read the 18th of Revelation to know the inevitable judgment of God upon godless commercialism in the last days. "For in one hour so great riches is come to nought" (Rev. 18:17). The glory of human wisdom, power and wealth will be brought to Nothing in that day (Rev. 6:12-17).

True Wisdom, Power and Wealth (Jer. 9:24).

What is it?

(a) "He understandeth and knoweth Me," saith the Lord. A true knowldege of God is the noblest aim of human understanding. How much He longs to be known by His creature! May you and I make this our pursuit, beloved of the Lord.

(b) The divine exercise of "loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness, in the earth." The manifestation of godly and moral virtues are directed toward mankind. How much "loving-kindness" exists today? Where is "judgment" or "justice" administered with equality for God's glory? And "righteousness?" The wise man wrote, "Righteousness exalteth a nation" (Prov. 13:34), but lawlessness prevails everywhere, foreshadowing the coming appearance of one who is called in Holy Scripture "The Lawless One" (2 Thess. 2:8, JND Trans.). Read Revelation 13.

(c) Christ is the true wisdom, power and wealth, for us who hear God's voice and come unto Him in the obedience of faith through Christ His Son, we read that "Christ ... is made unto us wisdom, and righteousnes, and sanctification, and redemption, that, according as it is written — He that Glorieth, Let Him Glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:30, 31).

"O mind divine, so must it be
That glory all belongs to God:
O love divine, that did decree
We should be part, through Jesus' blood!
"O keep us, love divine near THEE,
That we our nothingness may now,
And ever to the Thy Glory be

Walking in faith while here below.”

—J.N.D. 1880

Gold

Gold

J.W. Bramhall

Mr. John W. Bramhall of Charlotte, N.C., whose written ministry has frequently appeared in the magazine, is still active in the Lord's work in a Bible teaching and writing ministry.

There can be no other foundation beyond that which is already laid; I mean Jesus Christ Himself. If anyone builds on that foundation with gold, silver, and fine stone, or with wood, hay, and straw, the work that each man does will at last be brought to light; the day of judgment will expose it (1 Corinthians 3:11-13, New English Bible).

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, "gold, silver, precious stones" alone will stand the test of fire and be rewarded. The "wood, hay, and stubble" will be destroyed. We can rightly ask ourselves the question, "What is my reward then?" (1 Corinthians 9:18). What is the meaning and eternal implication of "gold, silver, precious stones"?

Gold is mentioned 479 times in Scripture. We know that it is the most coveted treasure of the natural heart; therefore, God symbolizes it as the most coveted gain for the spiritual man. In Scripture, gold is "the emblem of that which is divine, of the divine nature, excellence and glory." The Holy Jerusalem will be a city of "pure gold" and descend "out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Revelation 21). In the holiest of Solomon's Temple, nothing was seen but gold! Therefore it is the symbol of the glory and the presence of God! The

greatest treasure a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ can covet in life is fellowship with God in His holy presence.

Fellowship With God in the Sanctuary

Have you realized that the greatest privilege is to “enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19)? There is divine gold to be found there and we are to enter into God’s presence for two reasons:

1. We enter the holiest to worship God! This fulfills the desire of God our Father, that His children should worship Him (John 4:23, 24). This is gold! The sanctuary of Solomon’s Temple revealed nothing but gold: walls, ceiling, and floor were overlaid with “pure gold” (1 Kings 6). The Ark of the Covenant, symbol of Christ Himself in the midst of His people, and the covering cherubim, were also of “pure gold.” What a privilege for the High Priest in Israel to enter once a year into the holiest, but the people must stay outside! Now, since Christ’s death, burial, and glorification, the priesthood of all believers gives liberty for us to “enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” The sanctuary of God’s presence where our Great High Priest is, “heaven itself” (Hebrews 9:24), is our home and within this sanctuary our Lord Jesus Christ delights to lead His brethren’s praise to the delight of the heart of God (Hebrews 2:12). God dwells in the praises of His people, and since Israel refused that place, God has provided the Assembly, the New Testament Church, to be a consecrated company inside the sanctuary as purged worshippers to enjoy the divine glory of His presence. All saints are a “holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5) and are expected to avail themselves of this greatest of all Christian privileges. Do you gather with His people

around the instituted emblems of “the bread and wine” in order to remember the Lord and fellowship in worship and praise, giving thanks to the Father for the great gift of His Beloved Son? This, this indeed is “gold” of highest quality, which the Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal. How much of this “gold” shall you and I have in that day?

2. There is individual and corporate fellowship with God, as expressed by our “supplications, prayers, intercessions,” etc. (1 Timothy 2:1), which at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be revealed as “gold.” Every God-given opportunity to fellowship with Him in His holy presence will produce eternal gold. “Golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints” (Revelation 5:8) will be seen in heaven’s glory. How much time do we take in our daily life to lay up such “gold” for the day of rewards? Let us not neglect the “gold” of the sanctuary, both in worship and in prayer, for the day will declare it!

Fellowship With God in His Word

There is eternal gold, “the glory of the Lord” to be found in the Word of God on every page (see 2 Corinthians 3:18). The matchless glory of the Person of the Son of God is found in the pages of Holy Scripture from the beginning to the end. Do we approach the Word of God in our reading and studying for the purpose of discovering “gold”? Hear the psalmist’s words of its divine glory: “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold,” as he declares the value of God’s Word, in Psalm 19:10. Also, “the law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver” (Psalm 119:72). Again the psalmist speaks:

“Therefore I love Thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” (Psalm 119:127). How much gold have you and I accumulated from God’s Word? There is much gold to mine from the Word of God and at the Judgment Seat of Christ the quantity will be revealed!

Fellowship With God in Our Trials

The trials of a Christian should produce gold for eternity, “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). The golden cherubim of the earthly sanctuary were to be molded as coming through the fire and to be of beaten work as coming under the hammer (Exodus 25:12-18; 39:3-9). There is a Man in heaven who is the very center of the glory of God as the answer to the beaten gold of the cherubim where the glory cloud dwelt. He is the Lord Jesus Christ! Peter writes of “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11).

Our path is the same and in accordance Peter writes: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12, 13). There is divine gold for us in our troubles, fellowship to be known with God! The three Hebrew lads were cast into the fiery furnace for refusing to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s image of gold; but they found far better gold in the furnace — the glory of the Son of God! When Job found himself in the furnace of trial, he declared: “But He knoweth the ‘way that I

take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). What do you get out of your troubles? Find fellowship with God through and in them: they will bring you closer to Him and bring eternal gold for eternal reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ!

Fellowship With God in Our Service

Our whole occupation of life is to be obtaining gold for eternity, lived for "the glory of God." Is it not written, "Whether, therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31)? Even the smallest and the greatest of life's responsibilities can produce "gold" for eternity. Our very conversation, so often trivial and careless, should be carefully guarded as it can produce "gold." Listen to the wise man say, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Proverbs 25:11). The Apostle Paul counsels us saying, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Colossians 3:17). How much gold we are losing by neglecting faithful service for our Lord each day!

To summarize: the Judgment Seat of Christ will reveal how much fellowship my soul has enjoyed with God in every phase of earthly opportunity as dictated by His precious Word. Worship, prayer, Bible study, trials, and all my daily service for Him, will be subjected to the test of fire in the day of judgment. How much gold will He reveal? Let us lay aside the attractions of this world, consisting only of "lust and pride" and seek the gold that shall never be dim — the glory of God! In that day we shall be:

Where no shade nor stain can enter,

Nor the gold be dim:

In that holiness unsullied I shall walk with Him.

Meet companion, then, for Jesus,

From Him, for Him, made;

Glory of God's grace for ever,

There in me displayed.

—Reprinted from “Help & Food” magazine (November 1961)

Have You Found The Nail?

What a strange question! but it refers to the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and is a prophecy concerning His birth and death. The prophet Zechariah foretold His coming with this name and title, chapter 10 and verse 4 of his prophecy: "Out of him (the tribe of Judah) shall come forth... The Nail!" Numerous titles are given the Son of God in the Bible but this may be one of the strangest yet filled with great significance.

In Old Testament times a nail was used as a tent pin, driven into the ground (Exodus 27:19) and also as a strong pin, built into the wall of an eastern building securely, to hang vessels upon (Ezekiel 15:3). This latter explanation suggests why Christ is called "The Nail."

The Nail is to bear burdens. We place many things upon a nail, transferring them from ourselves, putting them upon the provided burden-bearer. The significant reason that Christ came to be "The Nail" is – He is the great Burden Bearer!

1. As The Nail, He bore the burden of our sin! It was upon the cross that Christ accomplished this great work: "who Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). The burden was incalculably heavy, for "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). It was the whole world's guilt that hung on the Blessed One: "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). There was no other person who could and did bear this load for us and he did not fail! "One died for all". Have you acknowledged that your sins were there laid upon Him? If so, you will know the joy of these words: "All thy sins

were laid upon Him, Jesus bore them on the tree; God, Who knew them, laid them on Him And believing, thou are free".

If not, find "The Nail" this moment: "we have found HIM" said Philip (John 1:45). "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6). Now turn to Him while you may; by faith see your sins "laid on Him" and you will find The Nail!

2. As the nail, He bears the burden of our cares! Troubles and sorrows fill the earth, from which none are exempt, but if we have found "The Nail" we shall find Him able to carry all our cares also. Surely, if we believe that He bore all our sins, we can also trust Him to carry all our care! Absolutely! Peter has bidden us to do this, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). How foolish for us to carry our own burdens with such provision as the Nail! "Cast thy burden on the Lord" wrote the Psalmist, "and He shall sustain thee" (Psalm 55:22). What are you doing with your burdens? Are you carrying them yourself? Find the Nail! Hang them on Him today and do not remove them! He is a "sure Nail." You can trust Him wholly, for "they that trust Him wholly, find Him wholly true". Have you found the Nail?

3. As the Nail He will have eternal glory! "They shall hang upon Him all the glory of His father's house" (Isaiah 22:24). The treasures of the house of David were hung in splendor upon the nails embedded in the walls, emblems of kingly glory. Today, the universe hangs on Him! (Heb. 1:3); tomorrow the government of the earth will hang on Him! (Isaiah 9:6) and in eternity

the glory of universal reign, in heaven and earth, will hang on Him also (Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:9-11).

Then why cannot we hang the glory of our lives upon the Nail today? He is worthy! Our sins were laid on Him! Our cares can be laid on Him! Our love; our talents; our possessions; our all, is worthy to be hung on that blessed Nail! Some day, a redeemed universe will ascribe unto the Nail eternal glory, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing!" (Rev. 5:11). Why wait for that day? Do it now! Have you found the Nail?

Jesus Is Coming

Jesus Is Coming

John Bramhall

The doctrine of the return of Christ demands careful and discriminating consideration. A distinction is to be made between two future events; first, Christ and His coming For His saints, and second; Christ and His coming With His saints.

In coming for his saints He descends into the air and receives to Himself those who are caught up from earth; some from the dead and others translated from a living state. This truth will be seen from such passages as, 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:22, 23, 51, 52.

In descending to the earth He personally places His feet on it. (Zech. 14:4-7), coming with His glorified saints. (Rev. 19:7, 8, 14, and Jude 14). He takes the Throne of David to establish His earthly kingdom of glory (Matt. 25:31). Though these two events differ in every particular, they are often confused and should be closely compared. They can be distinguished in the following way.

First; our gathering together unto Him, "Now we beseech you brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him," (2 Thess. 2:1). Second; The coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

First; Christ is the Morning Star, "I am the root and the offspring of David the bright and Morning Star," (Rev. 22:16; 2:28; 1 Pet. 1:19). Second, Christ is the Sun of

Righteousness, "But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings," (Mal. 4:2).

First; is the Day of Christ, "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the Day of Christ," (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phill. 1:6, 10, and 2:6). Second; is The Day of The Lord, "But the Day of The Lord will come as a thief in the night," (2 Pet. 3:10; 2 Thess. 2:2 R.V. and J.N.D. translations).

First; Is a signless and timeless event; at any moment, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power," (Acts 1:7). The believer is to be "waiting", "looking for", and "loving" it. (1 Thess. 1:9-10; Phil. 3:20; and Tit. 2:13). Second; an event whose approach is to be observed, "But ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief," (1 Thess. 5:4). The fulfillment of much prophecy is to precede it, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition," (2 Thess. 2:3).

First; has no reference to evil. Second; evil is ended on earth; Satan is judged; the Man of Sin destroyed, etc.

First; Israel is unchanged. Second; all of Israel's covenants are fulfilled.

First; the whole creation is unchanged. Second; the Gentile nations are judged. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the

glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," (Rom. 8:19-22).

First, the Church is removed from the earth, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed," (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thes. 4:13-18). Second; the Church is seen returning with Christ, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints," (Jude 14; Rev. 19:14).

First; A mystery not before revealed, "Behold, I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep," (1 Cor. 15:51). Second; revealed throughout both the Old and the New Testaments.

First; Christ appears as Bridegroom, Lord, and Head to the Church. Second; He appears as King, Messiah, and Emmanuel to Israel, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David," (Luke 1:32).

First; Not seen by the world. Enoch is the illustration of this, he was translated without being seen, for God took him, (Gen. 5:24). Second; will be visible to the entire earth, "Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him..." (Rev. 1:7).

First; Christians are judged as to their rewards, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be," (Rev. 22:12). Second; nations are to be judged as to the Kingdom, "And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He

shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats," (Matt. 25:31-46).

The order of these two events is obvious; Christ cannot come to the earth With His saints until He shall have come first of all For His saints.

Love For Christ

Love For Christ

John W. Bramhall

In this devotional study on the believer's love for Christ, Mr. John W. Bramhall of Charlotte, N.C., takes us into two homes which we read about in the Gospels. His Insights, among other things, should help us understand how we may maintain and deepen our love for our Lord.

Let us visit two homes: the home of Simon the Pharisee and the home at Bethany where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. In the first one we can learn of love to Christ awakened, and in the other of love to Christ maintained and deepened.

Love Awakened (Luke 7:36-39, 47)

This awakening of love took place in the heart of a burdened sinner who entered uninvited into the home of Simon the Pharisee. Here was a woman of whom the Lord said, "She loved much." Her sinful character is described by the Holy Spirit. She was "a woman in the city who was a sinner." She knew it; Simon knew it; everyone knew it; but she was a burdened sinner who had heard words of grace and love from the Lord Jesus that melted her heart. Driven by her deep need and drawn by His grace, she boldly entered Simon's home and stood at the feet of Jesus. It was the meeting of a hell-bound sinner with the heaven-sent Saviour.

Consternation and silence gripped the guests and the host himself. Would the Lord expose her and dismiss her from His presence? All felt that He should, but Christ

can never condemn a confessing, repenting sinner. The silence was broken by the sobbing of this weeping sinner at the feet of her Saviour. Her broken and contrite heart was now won to Him as her tears expressed deep sorrow for her sins and the kisses upon His feet proved that her heart was His forever.

Was not our love for Christ similarly awakened? We discovered the One who knew the worst about us, and yet loved us, “even when we were dead in sins” (Eph. 2:4). Our love for Him was thus awakened and we were enabled to sing:

I’ve found a Friend, Oh such a Friend!

He loved me ere I knew Him;

He drew me with the cords of love,

And thus He bound me to Him.

Love Maintained (Luke 10:38-42)

How sadly true it is that following the awakening of love to Christ the freshness of our “first love” often wanes. “Thou has left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4), the Lord has to say; and for various causes we permit this to take place. Some believers make such slow progress in spiritual intelligence and growth, while others go on to develop lives of deeper fellowship with the Lord. How, then, may our devotion to Christ be maintained?

Our visit to this second home at Bethany provides the answer to our question. Love for the Lord had been awakened in the heart of both Mary and Martha, yet one grew deeper in grace and in the knowledge of her Saviour, while the other was hindered by self and over anxiety in her service. Why the difference? Well,

Martha's love sought to meet the material needs of her Lord, while Mary's love sought to satisfy her Lord's deep desire by sitting at His feet and listening to His voice. Martha was busily occupied with "many things" could only disappoint the "one thing more needful." The many things," while Mary chose "many things" could only disappoint and ultimately disappear, but Mary's part, the Lord said, "shall not be taken away from her."

Surely, sitting at His feet alone we can maintain our love for Christ. It is there we hear His words that reveal to us His heart. Only at His feet do we become students in the school of His love, where our devotion can be maintained. If we have left our first love, it is there that it can be regained.

Love Deepened (John 11)

It is also in the home at Bethany that we can learn how love for the Lord is deepened by the intense sorrows of life. Our everyday lives are frequently invaded by sorrows and trials. There are some occasions of deepest sorrow and trial which the Saviour permits for the purpose of deepening our love for Him, as perhaps no other way can. Sickness invaded the happy home at Bethany and the dark shadow of death hovered over the family circle, bringing intense gloom. The two sisters properly drew on the priceless love of Christ in their grief and desperation. "He whom thou lovest is sick" was their brief but urgent appeal which they sent to the Saviour. It was not an appeal on the ground of their love for the Lord Jesus, nor on the ground of Lazarus' love for Him. Rather, having made their appeal to the right Person, their plea was on the basis of His love for their brother. The love of the sisters and of Lazarus for the

Lord was feeble in comparison with His love for them, and so they left their deep sorrow and its great need in the hands of One who loved Lazarus with a perfect, unchanging and eternal love. Can we ever be disappointed by Him when we cast our sorrows on the boundless resources of His unfailing love? Never!

But it was to deepen their love for Him that the Saviour intensified their sorrow by allowing Lazarus to die before He arrived at Bethany. It was the way of His love, though perhaps very difficult for Mary and Martha to understand, as we can well appreciate. Nevertheless, the Psalmist wrote, "As for God, His way is perfect" (Psa. 18:30). Once patience had wrought her perfect work, the Lord Jesus arrived on the scene and they were privileged to witness one of the most amazing sights in the life and ministry of the Son of God on earth. They witnessed the tears of His own love for them, for we read, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). These were not tears for Lazarus, for the Lord knew what He was about to do. Nor were His tears merely the evidence of His deep love for Lazarus, as the Jews thought. They were tears of deepest sympathy for the grief and sorrow in the hearts of the sisters, Martha and Mary. He was weeping with them. How could they ever have forgotten His tears on this occasion of sorrow and grief?

In the home of Simon we saw a sinner weeping in the presence of her Lord, but how far more sublime and marvelous to our hearts to see the Saviour of sinners weeping in the presence of sorrowful hearts, truly "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). It was in and through all this intense sorrow that Christ declared His love for them and deepened their love for Him. After the sorrow was past and their brother

restored to life again, their greater love for Him was exhibited as they made Him a supper (John 12), where in happy communion the reunited family made Him the centre of their heart's affection and devotion more than ever before.

Likewise, in our sorrows and trials, the Lord seeks to reveal the treasures of His love in greater measure and deepen the devotion and love of our hearts for Him.

Would we wish to have it any other way?

Our visit to these two homes is finished. May the Lord help us to learn from our visit that at the feet of Jesus, as sinners, our love is awakened; at the feet of Jesus, as learners, our love is maintained; and at the feet of Jesus, through sorrows and trials, our love is deepened.

Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus,

This is the place for me;

Here I have learned deep lessons,

Truth that has made me free.

Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus,

Free from the ways of men;

Chains of thought that once bound me,

Ne'er can enslave again.

Only THYSELF, Lord Jesus,

Conquered my wayward will;

But for Thy love constraining,

I had been wayward still.

Perfect Peace

Perfect Peace

John W. Bramhall

“Thou wilt keep in perfect peace the mind stayed on thee, for he confideth in thee” (Isaiah 26:3, J.N. Darby trans.).

Do we believe and prove the above words of God? Though oppressed and surrounded with difficulties, can we know this “perfect peace” of heart and mind? Is it a practical, absolute defence for us in every circumstance and trial of life or should we consider it an impossibility?

Before we dismiss it as impossible, let us ask two questions: first, if a believer has entrusted the care of his eternal welfare to the Lord (2 Timothy 1:12), then why not be able to entrust the temporary problems of life to His care (2 Corinthians 4:17-18; 1 Peter 5:7)? Second, if God Himself is unable to keep the heart and mind of a believer in “perfect peace,” who is able to do this? We have no other perfect source of help to turn to! Yet we often frantically seek other sources of help when trials of life press the soul. The psalmist properly advises us: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes” (Psalm 118:8-9).

God’s Condition For Perfect Peace

Note the words of Isaiah: “whose mind is stayed on thee.” The “mind” is to be constantly occupied with God. There is a deep personal knowledge of God. He is the supreme knowledge of the mind and heart; the dearest

and greatest object. He must be this to us in order to enjoy “perfect peace.” How can we do this; how can this be possible? There are two chief sources of help.

1. By faith I believe His Word. True faith that apprehends God (Hebrews 11:1, 6) is “the firm, irrevocable, unquestioning grasp of divinely revealed facts” that are found in the Word of God. His words are the unfolding of His thoughts towards me, which I must mentally assimilate (Jeremiah 15:16). My faith must not doubt but accept every promise He has revealed in His Word. Like the Apostle Paul, we should say, “For I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Acts 27:25). It is in and through His precious Word that we grow into a personal knowledge of God.

2. By prayer I commune with God. Personal knowledge of God acquired through His Word will affect my prayer life. This is not merely coming and asking God for this or that, but in the all-inclusive meaning of prayer there will be communion with God. My heart will be poured out to Him in love, adoration, praise and worship (see 1 Chronicles 17:16-27; Luke 10: 39).

Only to sit and think of God,

Oh what a joy it is!

To think the thought, to breathe the Name,

Earth has no higher bliss.

— F.W. Faber

In what other way can we attain to this “perfect peace”? There is no other way for a personal knowledge of God to fulfill our Scripture — “the mind is stayed on thee, for he confideth in thee.” What confidence we will have “in the Lord”! Is not my God above me (Psalm 91:4); is He

not beneath me (Deuteronomy 33:27); is He not before me, and also behind me (Exodus 14:19)? Why can I not have “perfect peace” with such a God as this? No wonder Satan could say to God about His servant Job, “Hast thou not made an hedge about him?” (Job 1:10). Surely this is true for every child of God!

A mind at perfect peace with God:

Oh, what a word is this!

A sinner reconciled through blood:

This, this indeed is peace!

Why should I ever careful be,

Since such a God is mine?

He watches o’er me night and day,

And tells me “Mine is thine.”

The Blessedness of Perfect Peace

No better description can be found to describe “perfect peace” than the words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 4:5-7: “The Lord is near. Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and thoughts by Christ Jesus” (J.N. Darby trans.).

May the Saviour’s precious words dwell deep within our hearts in these troublous days, saying to all His own, “I leave peace with you; I give my peace to you: not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear” (John 14:27, J.N. Darby trans.).

Stayed upon Jehovah!

Hearts are fully blest;

Finding as He promised,

Perfect peace and rest!

“And the God of peace shall be with you.”

Resurrection Ministry

Resurrection Ministry

John Bramhall

One great proof of our Lord's resurrection is the work He performed on the day He arose. Though the sheep were all scattered when the Shepherd was smitten (Zech. 13:7. Matt. 26:31. Mark 14:50), He sought them throughout the day of resurrection until, at its close, they were all gathered round Him once again.

What He did THAT day has been repeated many times since, and will yet be repeated till He comes for His own bye and bye.

A Sorrowing Heart

In her devotion, Mary Magdalene sorrowed above all others for her crucified Lord. With her sorrowing heart, she was the first object of His search; He first revealed Himself to her (John 20:11-18).

"They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him," was her grief-stricken cry. Without Him, the whole world was black. Not even a vision of angels could solace her, for she wanted Him, and HIM ALONE!

Her desire and devotion exceeded her physical strength as she said, "Tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Then to the sorrowing heart of Mary, the Lord first ministered His resurrection grace; turning sorrow to joy, tears to laughter, and mourning to gladness. Calling His

own sheep by name (John 10:3), Jesus said to her, "Mary!" Then she knew Him, and sorrow vanished!

Immediately, He commissioned her to renewed service, saying, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God."

Sorrowing hearts! The world is full of them. But here is One, the risen Lord, Who has ministered for centuries to multitudes, Who can bring grace and pardon in redemptive power. Sorrow, the result of sin, covers the earth; but praise God for the power of His Son to bring the joy of forgiveness.

Right now, He is ready to minister to every heart sorrowing for sin; "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). And to sorrowing saints, Who but the Risen Lord can minister the comfort so greatly needed in the midst of trial? Thank God He lives, and lives for us!

A Soiled Conscience

On the resurrection morn, the angel had said, "Tell His disciples AND PETER." (Mark 16:7). Why the special message for Peter? Peter's was a very soiled conscience, for fellowship between him and his Lord had been broken through his denial of the Saviour. And the soiled conscience was the next object of the Lord's risen ministry.

Bitter tears of remorse had flowed for the disciple's heart was broken when he realized his sin. Yet who can

forgive like Christ? The great tender heart of the Son of God planned a reconciliation.

When it happened and where, we shall never know unless the Lord or Peter tells us some day. But there was a meeting, we know. Blessed reconciliation: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." (Lk. 24:34). Peter was restored, his soiled conscience cleansed! Hallelujah! What a Saviour!!

Saint or sinner — have you a soiled conscience? A secret meeting with the risen Lord will settle it all. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). And who but our risen Lord could deal with a guilty conscience in the power of His own blood? "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Even today, multitudes of soiled consciences on the earth can experience the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. "How much more shall the blood of Christ ... purge your conscience" (Heb. 9:14).

Straying Feet

On the resurrection day, two disciples were walking the Emmaus road of doubt, despair, discouragement, and disillusionment (Lk. 24: 13-35). They, too, were the objects of the Lord's tender care that day.

As they dragged their weary hearts and feet back home, they believed that all was finished! Christ their Master had died! He was not to be found, not even His body could be located! Where He was, they knew not; their hopes had died with Him!

But the great, good Shepherd had to bring these two back as well, so “Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.” What a change the living Saviour wrought as He spoke to those straying ones: straying from Jerusalem the divine centre; straying from His Word; and, of course, from Himself. First, He brought them back to the Scriptures, then to Himself, and lastly to Jerusalem where, with new joy, new strength, and a new message, they hastened to tell others, “He is risen!”

Still He walks the Emmaus road with His people today. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” is His promise (Heb. 13:5-6). He is living today, and with every believer He walks the daily path of life. If you are straying from Him, let Him now minister to your heart and bring you back into fellowship with Himself.

If you are a straying sinner, listen to His tender love pleading with your soul, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). He is still the seeking Shepherd, seeking the straying sheep, and seeking the lost ones. Blessed be His Name!

The Final Result

As the fearful disciples gathered in Jerusalem behind closed doors, “the same day at evening, being the first day of the week... came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (John 20:19-23).

The risen Lord was again in the midst of His sheep, and those who had been scattered were gathered again to their beloved Shepherd: Mary Magdalene, Peter, the pair from Emmaus, and all the others too. Hallelujah!

They were all around Himself once more. No wonder it was written, “Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.” They were glad to see Him alive; and He, no doubt, was glad to see them gathered again around Him.

And this is His desire every resurrection day — every Lord’s Day — every first day of the week: His own around Himself, in worship, love and praise; in happy fellowship and joy. What a contrast can be seen in such gatherings of men and women who once possessed sorrowing hearts, soiled consciences, and straying feet. After redeeming grace has brought them from the paths of sin and sorrow, to gather them in love and gratitude about His person, what a picture is seen of that great meeting in Heaven, when His saints will be gathered around Himself, forever removed from the sorrows of life, the sin of earth, and the crooked paths of this world; never again to grieve, or sin, or wander. What a prospect!

But in the meantime, the risen Lord still desires to reach the multitudes on every hand, with sorrowful hearts, soiled consciences, and straying feet. Are we helping Him to fulfil this ministry?

“As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). By His grace, may we minister to needy souls in the power of His resurrection and bring them back to Himself.

The resurrection ministry begun on the day He arose still goes on today. And it **MUST** go on, with His people serving in His absence until He comes again.

Spiritual Ambition

In his second epistle, Peter describes the condition of professing Christendom and the unbelieving world as existing at the end of the age. Two particular forms of evil are recorded: first, in chapter 2, the presence of false teachers propagating unsound doctrine, accompanied by wicked deeds, prominently characterizes the last days of Christendom; second, in chapter 3, the increase of scoffing infidels signifies another proof of the last days. With arrogant unbelief, the promise of Christ's coming is openly denied by men, supposedly on the basis that the present creation has an eternal stability. Peter reminds such that a universal catastrophe once destroyed the earth and foretells another disaster of divine intervention that will not only destroy the present earth, but the heavens also (2 Peter 3:5-10). The peril of the last days is indicated by the apostle in a twofold way: first, "many shall follow" the dissolute ways of the false teachers bringing in "damnable heresies," (2 Peter 2:1-3), and secondly, the danger of spiritual inertia exists among the saints of God in these same days, causing the apostle to frequently emphasize the need of diligence (2 Peter 1:5, 10, 12, 15; 3:14).

In his first epistle, chapter 5, Peter describes the adversary as "a roaring lion," against whom the saints are to exercise vigilance. In the second letter, the character of Satan is the cunning and subtle serpent, a snake in the grass, manifesting himself as an "angel of light" through the false teachers. This manner of deceit

is more dangerous than the roaring lion, demanding greater diligence than ever.

THE INCENTIVE FOR SPIRITUAL AMBITION

To encourage the believers in such conditions, the apostle presents the glory of the coming kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as an incentive to stir their hearts. Peter possessed a twofold source of assurance concerning this.

1. He had personally seen the glory of the kingdom: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1:16-18). Together with James and John, Peter had been fully initiated into the mysteries of kingdom glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.

2. More conclusive than his personal testimony, was the Word of God. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19-21). The ministry of Old Testament prophets abounds with descriptive glories of the coming kingdom of our Lord, this being a major doctrine that occupies a greater part of God's Word than any other.

Though Christendom is apostate and the world ridicules the promise of His coming, yet a glorious incentive

remains for the believer -- the soon appearing King and the glory of His kingdom!

THE FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL AMBITION

Let us clearly understand that Peter is writing to those who have the true foundation of spiritual ambition: "to them that have received like precious faith with us through [the] righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1 N.T.). To these, all divine provision for spiritual growth is definitely promised (2 Peter 1:2-4). Thus everyone who has placed his faith in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ has the foundation for spiritual energy.

THE MARKS OF SPIRITUAL AMBITION

Seven elements of Christian character are to be developed in the believer's life, which upon appearance are distinguishing marks of spiritual energy in evidence. They are (1) "virtue" or courage; (2) "knowledge"; (3) "temperance" or self control; (4) "patience" or endurance; (5) "godliness"; (6) "brotherly kindness"; and (7) "love." These are the productiveness of faith, as J. N. Darby's translation helpfully renders the passage, "In your faith have also virtue, etc." Let us prayerfully meditate upon them in their separate graces and, while doing so, ask our hearts if these marks of spiritual ambition are present in our personal testimony.

1. "Virtue," or courage, is spiritual ambition in action, regardless of the difficulties involved. With courage, the privileges of assembly life and spiritual responsibilities must be entered into. Worship, prayer, ministry of the Word, witnessing, and every phase of Christian responsibility demand courage. Difficulties must never

be allowed to prevent this mark of spiritual ambition from being shown.

2. "Knowledge," which implies spiritual wisdom and intelligence, must be acquired in an experimental manner. This cannot be ours without fellowship with God daily, through the study of His Word, communion with Him in prayer, and the practical obedience of our lives to His revealed will. Are we growing into this knowledge day by day?

3. "Temperance," or self-control, is the Christian grace which manifests continence in the believer's life. Paul wrote concerning this great need to govern his body, saying, "I buffet my body, and lead it captive, lest [after] having preached to others I should be myself rejected" (1 Corinthians 9:27 N.T.). Is my body led "captive" or am I in captivity to my body with its natural desires?

4. "Patience," or endurance, meaning in the Greek text, "cheerful or hopeful endurance," is the next grace. It possibly is one thing to endure but another thing to endure "cheerfully" the testings and trials of life's circumstances.

5. "Godliness," in accordance with God's scheme, that we should be holy in life. Practical holiness is the result of the previous graces being manifested, for they enable us to be "partakers of His holiness." What a glorious crown of Christian character is godliness! Is it yours?

6. "Brotherly affection" is a true Philadelphian character! "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). Affection for the Lord's beloved people shines out as a blessed mark of spirituality, but how this is greatly

lacking today! "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another," said the Lord to His own.

7. "Love," the flow of divine grace toward the whole world, showing the constraining love of Christ to every man, is a crowning proof of spirituality! "Let us do good unto all men" is the Spirit's injunction in Galatians 6:10. These are the marks of spiritual ambition we should diligently seek to develop in our Christian character, even in the midst of apostate conditions and worldly skepticism! Do they shine out in our character and conduct?

Does it compensate to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18)? Let us hear Peter's admonition, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, use diligence to make your calling and election sure, for doing these things ye will never fall; for thus shall the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be richly furnished unto you" (2 Peter 1:10-11 N.T.).

Two facts denote the blessed reward for all who will obey the stirring injunction of the apostle to be diligent:

1. A present steadfastness in spiritual testimony will appear: "ye will never fall."

2. A future glory and honor will also be a God-given reward! God will spare no expense as to our entrance into the everlasting kingdom, for it will be "richly furnished unto you."

The blessedness of the Father's house above will be known by all of His children. Yet, when the glory of His majesty and the power of His kingdom shall be made

known, our position of honor in that scene of glory will completely depend upon our Christian character and the spiritual testimony we have been for Him here on earth. May God the Holy Spirit stir His beloved people today, causing them to rise from spiritual inertia into paths of spiritual ambition, for His Name's sake!

Spiritual Unconsciousness

Spiritual Unconsciousness

John Bramhall

Moses was spiritually unconscious of the glory of God which shone in his face; he is a shining example to us all. Samson was spiritually unconscious of the fact that the Lord had left him impotent; his life is a solemn warning.

Samson's Name Means "Sunlight"

In the dark days of Israel's spiritual and moral declension, he was to be a shining light to the people of God. They were dominated by their enemies dwelling in the land, and Samson was born to be their deliverer.

To-day, we still find God's people dominated by an inward foe, the flesh. Spiritual light and strength are still needed for deliverance.

Samson Had a High Calling

"The child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb" was the angel's command (Jud. 13:5). Some Israelites fulfilled the Nazarite vow for only a specified purpose and time. (Num. 6:1-8), but Samson was called for life to this holy privilege and solemn responsibility.

1. HE WAS FORBIDDEN TO DRINK WINE. The fruit of the vine was forbidden in every form, being spiritually significant of the earthly pleasures which by nature everyone seeks. While upon earth, Christ was the true Nazarite (Lk. 2:49. Jn. 2:4; 4:32-34); He set before Him

the Father's will above everything else. Samson also should have delighted in the will of God.

2. HE WAS FORBIDDEN TO SHAVE HIS HEAD. There was no strength in mere long hair, but while the Nazarite vow was upon him, he was to be holy, and the locks of his head were to grow. God writes in 1 Cor. 11:14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" The length of his locks was to remind Samson that he was to be God's humble and obedient servant. They symbolized his earthly reproach for God, like that borne by the perfectly humble One Who took the lowest place of all, our Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:5-8).

3. HE WAS FORBIDDEN TO TOUCH A DEAD BODY. Contact with death brought defilement and dishonour to the Nazariteship. He was to maintain a constant separation from their influences. Again our Lord is the truest and most perfect example (Heb. 7:26).

All this was commanded because the consecration of his God was upon his head; all the days of his separation he was holy unto the Lord (Num. 6:7-8). A complete life of fellowship and service with God was Samson's high and holy calling. Upon his obedience depended his strength and his victories, not upon the length of his locks.

Samson Failed

It was a gradual, slipping process, going step by step down the road of failure, because he esteemed the honour of God less than his own sinful pleasures.

1. HIS HEART DID NOT REMAIN PURE. Elijah fled from Jezebel in Ahab's day, but Samson embraced the Jezebels of his day, caring nothing for his responsibility

to maintain a holy life before a holy God. His vow said that he was holy unto the Lord. How tragic the disobedience! How unholy the path!

2. HE PRIDED HIMSELF IN HIS PHYSICAL STRENGTH. Instead of humbly and gratefully acknowledging the God who had given him power, he only boasted and vaunted himself in the pride of his heart, in personal display, and in selfish delight. The guilt is terrible and the consequences are tragic when one uses God-given honour and blessing for personal exaltation.

3. HIS SENSUAL PLEASURES EVENTUALLY BROUGHT HIS DOWNFALL. “The Philistines be upon thee Samson,” called Delilah. “And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him” (Jud. 16:20). Unconscious of his spiritual impotence, he then became the object of sport and derision by the enemy. Poor blind Samson! What a tragic end to the testimony of his life! And how very much like the blind Laodiceans of our own day (Rev. 3:17).

There are many defiling influences today in the world from which the child of God should separate himself (2 Cor. 6:14- 7:1). When the sensitive, subconscious mind is daily exposed to the world’s pride, pleasure, and riches—rather than to Christ and His Word—inevitable weakness of testimony follows. If the Christian dallies with the world’s sin and folly, his Nazarene locks will be shorn as surely as were Samson’s. “But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Samson Experienced Final Victory

The complete account of his life is not without recovery and final victory (Jud. 16:22-30). The truth that "He restoreth my soul" has often been proven; so God in grace restored Samson. The sorrow and remorse of a defeated life must have been brought home to his soul, as "he did grind in the prison house" of the enemy. Conscious of his spiritual failure, Samson in repentance prayed unto God. The Spirit of God records that "the hair of his head began to grow again" and in the hour when the enemy rejoiced over the defeated servant, "Samson called unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, remember me, I pray Thee, and strengthen me, I pray Thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes!" This, unfortunately, is the second time only, that we read of Samson praying. "And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines" as he took hold of the middle pillars upon which the house stood. Then "he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life". What a sad, yet heroic end to a tragic life!

"Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Moses' life is exemplary, with God's glory shining in his face. Samson's life is a warning, with weakness and blindness evident in his countenance.

"The false, the deceit that you bear in your heart
Will not stay inside where it first got a start;
For sinew and blood are a thin veil of lace:

What you wear in your heart, you wear in your face!"

We travel the upward road to glory by gradual stages of growth and obedience; we follow the downward path to weakness by gradual stages of degeneracy and disobedience. We sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a destiny. As our hearts are inclined toward the influences which mould our characters for blessing, or toward the things which spoil them unto tragedy, we shall have unconscious glory or unconscious impotence in our spiritual testimony. We shall either be like Moses or like Samson. The choice is ours. May each of us obey the Word of God, for, "We all, with open face beholding, as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18). Are we being transformed daily into His likeness? God grant that it may be so; and that by His grace we might show forth the glory of our Saviour in our countenances.

"O fix our earnest gaze,
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That with THY beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see."

That Wonderful Moment

That Wonderful Moment

John W. Bramhall

The minutest division of time can be defined as a “moment”! How many moments have passed in human history is incalculable to us, yet in our lives there have been moments of importance. Some have been moments of eager expectation with the anticipation of an event perhaps being greater than the event itself! However, there is one prospective moment before the Christian which will be the greatest experienced and without disappointment, filled with great surprise! It will not be of any transitory character for it will usher us into eternal ages of glory! This special “moment” is in God’s Word declared by the Holy Spirit, through His servant the Apostle Paul:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52).

It Is A Moment of Anticipation

The promise was given by our Saviour in John 14:3. Later it was confirmed by angels in Acts 1:11. Then it was taught in all the epistles by God’s servants. The anticipation of the Lord’s return has been an unfailing source of encouragement to saints thru the Christian age. It has comforted millions who were looking for Him! The moment of it is so near! Perhaps today! In the

midst of trials, sufferings, sorrows, pain, sickness and even our failures, we are crying with greater longing and anticipation, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”

It Is A Moment of Transformation

Blessed transformation it will be! In that moment “the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”. With eternal bodies of incorruptible glory the saints shall rise from their graves “in incorruption.” They will be raised “in glory”; and “in power”; with “a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

The living saints “shall be changed” at that “moment” for “we shall not all sleep.” Many saints will be living when the Saviour comes. What an experience they will have as “this mortal puts on immortality” in that indivisible element of time “a moment!” In this connection it is significant that the Holy Spirit uses a Greek word for this occasion: the word *atomos*. It means that only “an atom of time” is required for God to work this tremendous transformation. Thayer’s Greek Lexicon defines it as follows: “that cannot be cut in two, or divided, indivisible.” What a moment! Are we anticipating this great transformation by saying, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus?”

It Is A Moment of Translation

“By faith Enoch was translated” we read in Hebrews 11, verse 5. From earth to heaven he traveled; also Elijah did the same (2 Kings 2:11). What an unusual experience for these two men, yet for them it was a solitary journey. Not so for us, as there will be an exodus of millions of saints who will fill the skies above when the glorious rapture occurs. Multitudes from the graves

and others from the earth will rise together for that upward journey from earth to heaven! An incomparable travel plan! A dual anthem will be their note of praise as they rise; one section singing, "O death where is thy sting?" and the other will sing, "O grave where is thy victory?" What a translation it will be! With no other qualification than being "in Christ" this great exodus of saints will leave the earth! "The dead in Christ shall rise first and we which are alive and remain (also in Christ)" will leave this world of sin and darkness to travel up and up, to meet our Lord "in the air" and enter the glory of heaven above with Him! A multitude of happy saints will travel home together! Does your heart and mine thrill for that wonderful moment by saying with sincerity, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus?"

It Is A Moment of Unification

In His great priestly prayer to the Father, our Lord prayed for His own, saying, "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). The oneness of all His People was on His great heart, but we confess this was only manifested in the early days of His church. It soon faded away, unfortunately, as the failure of men and the power of Satan divided the church. Will it again be unified? Can men do it? Never! Present ecumenical efforts will end in complete failure!

There is but one certain way that the unification of the Church will be finally accomplished and when it happens it will be done "in a moment" Praise the Lord! The moment the Lord comes for His own "we shall be caught up together!" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Not one saint will be missing! What tragic mistake when some think so! They will be pleasantly disappointed! There are some

believers who may now refuse to be found with some saints upon the earth today, but in that moment of translation will find themselves included with the great company together! They should not be disappointed then and may it be they will not be embarrassed either! Yet, other saints today neglect the exhortation of Hebrews 10:25, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is.” They may be careless and indifferent about being at the meeting of the saints on the earth, to their shame; but when the rapture comes they will find themselves present at “The meeting in the air!” Fellow Christians, we shall all be there! Do our hearts yearn for that blessed unification of God’s people in its precious oneness? Do we desire to see the saints united together in perfect testimony? If so, let us sincerely pray, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”.

It Is A Moment of Glorification

Do we consider what glory this moment is going to be for our beloved Lord, when He will present His Church “to Himself a glorious Church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). What a moment this will be for Him! and what a moment for us! What a day of glorification it will be!

First, our Lord will look upon His glorified Bride, His “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:45), and be satisfied with her beauty. She then will be the perfect object of His eternal affections. Second, we shall look upon Him, on His face of inexpressible love and glory and we shall be “like Him” for ever (1 John 3:2). We shall also be for ever “with Him” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). We shall for ever “see Him” (1 John 3:2). What a moment of

glorification for us when at last we “shall see His face” (Revelation 22:4).

Can you name a more wonderful moment? Is there a better prospect than this in the believer’s future? Does it not make the believer’s heart yearningly cry out, Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20)? Beloved, that wonderful moment is near! Think of its glory and say with the poet:

“And is it so — I shall be like Thy Son?

Is this the grace which He for me has won?

Father of glory, (thought beyond all thought!)

In glory, to His own blest likeness brought!

Oh, Jesus, Lord, who loved me like to Thee?

Fruit of Thy work, with Thee, too, there to see

Thy glory, Lord, while endless ages roll,

Myself the prize and travail of Thy soul.

Nor I alone; Thy loved ones all, complete

In glory, round Thee there with joy shall meet

All like Thee, for Thy glory like Thee, Lord,

Object supreme of all, by all adored.”

J. N. Darby

The Adequate Teacher

The Adequate Teacher

John Bramhall

Sunday School teaching is not getting any easier, and this is not surprising, for “in the last days, difficult times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1-5). There is no promise of spiritual recovery to pristine beauty and strength; only further emphasis of increasing apostasy and declension as “wicked men wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:1).

In such perilous days, every teacher needs a prayerful and thoughtful appraisal of his spiritual resources, coupled with a determination to appropriate them for his blessing and for God’s glory. God has always provided the necessary resources for His children in every age; but we must know what they are and how to use them, if we are going to serve Him effectively in bringing the gospel to girls and boys today.

The Holy Spirit

The Spirit of God is a real, living Person, One of the members of the Godhead. Although He has not taken human form as did the Son of God, yet the reality of His Personal Being is clearly taught in Scripture.

To the children of God today, He bears a special relationship not known in past ages and not to be known in future dispensations.

The Lord Himself promised the Spirit of God to His disciples just before He went back to heaven. “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another

Comforter, that He may abide with you forever” (John 14:16).

Consider first the greatness of His Person — another Comforter. The words imply “another like myself”— One Who is equal in His Person to Christ our Lord!

The word “Comforter” also means one who helpfully carries on the cause of another. This the Saviour did for His own when He was on earth; and this He now does for them in heaven (1 John 2:1-2). But the Holy Spirit has been given to manage, control, direct and take charge of our affairs while we are here upon the earth.

Do we permit Him to thus manage us? What is our attitude toward His Person? Do we yield ourselves to His government? Great is our responsibility. But if we obey, greater still will be the proof of His power working in and through us, for the blessing of the children committed to our care.

Consider also the irrevocable character of the Spirit’s presence! “That He may abide with you FOREVER!” We may vex, grieve, or even quench the Holy Spirit, but no conduct of ours will ever drive Him away. Blessed grace of our God!

But should we not make complete surrender to His sovereign presence and power by yielding our beings to His control? He is our resource of strength today, and will be to the end of our days!

The Word of God

God’s Word is also one of the greatest sources of strength and an unfailing channel of divine help for those who diligently seek its truths.

Timothy was admonished to “continue ... in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of” (2 Tim. 3:14). We must maintain our affection and appreciation for God’s Word. It is the source of vital strength for us and has a dual effect in us (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

First, “the Holy Scriptures... are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” God’s Word brings the knowledge of salvation; but in addition, it imparts the guidance and wisdom needed when we are surrounded by spiritual difficulties and when we need to be delivered from the dangers that would overcome us in “the last days.” Do we believe it? Do we daily use the Scriptures to this end?

Second, for our spiritual growth and maturity, completing our spiritual equipment, through “doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction”, the Word of God will prove all-sufficient to increase our usefulness in reaching youngsters for God’s glory.

What is my attitude towards God’s Word? Do I use it daily to seek its divine strength and comfort for my soul? Let me say with the Psalmist, “How sweet are Thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Ps. 119:103).

The Throne of Grace

Weaknesses and infirmities harrass us continually, but God has provided access to a throne in heaven, from which our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, is able to minister the needed help for us on earth.

“Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace — the throne of God’s

unmerited favour; that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in good time for every need — appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it”, especially in teaching the Scriptures to the young (See Heb. 4:16, Amplified Version).

A living, loving, risen and glorified Lord as our Great High Priest, is upon that throne above on our behalf. Through His sufferings on earth, He is able to run to the cry of those who are being tempted and tested and tried (Heb. 2:17-18). What a blessed source of strength this is for every teacher!

But does every teacher use it? Is every opportunity seized upon to prove the merits of the Lord’s grace when needed? The throne of grace is another incomparable provision for our spiritual strength in these “difficult days” of ministering the gospel.

A Pair of Knees

The spiritual emergencies recorded in the Bible indicate that God’s servants who manifested spiritual strength in apostate and unholy days, were men who used their knees. Glance with me at Elijah on Mount Carmel during Israel’s apostasy. While “Ahab went up to eat and to drink ... Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees” (1 Kings 18:42). Look into the chambers of Ezra the scribe, in the days of the peoples’ transgression. With heaviness of heart he cries: “I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God.” Travel in memory into godless and heathen Babylon to witness the consistent behaviour of Daniel. “He went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his

knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime" (Dan. 6:10). The beloved Paul reveals his love and concern for the saints at Ephesus, saying, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ..." (Eph. 3:14). The dying Stephen ends his powerful testimony on his knees. "He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

Well has Isaiah written long ago: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31).

May the Holy Spirit help us to use these resources every day and prove our God is able to keep and to use His own, particularly in winning young hearts to the Saviour.

The Adornment of an Assembly

The Adornment of an Assembly

John Bramhall

The Epistle of Titus beautifully portrays the spiritual adornment of a local church. Titus was instructed by Paul to minister in God's assembly on Crete, and to establish God's testimony according to scriptural pattern. Chapters one and two present God's appreciation of an assembly testimony: He is impressed neither by outward adornment nor by geographical surroundings, but rather by the spiritual character and conduct of His beloved people.

The Adornment of The Elders

In their proper place of responsibility, godly elders should adorn every assembly. These are to be Spirit-directed overseers who shepherd the flock of God, performing their work among God's people with power and blessing. The Apostle reveals their qualifications and work (Titus 1:5-11). How beautiful to God is a company of qualified shepherds who adorn God's assembly in this position and work!

The Adornment of Aged Men

Aged men, though possibly not qualifying as shepherds, are to be "sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience" (2:2). How precious to God is the testimony of men who fulfil His Word by growing in spiritual character and maturity! They are an adornment of divine glory and blessing among the people of God, contributing spiritual beauty and power to the local

assembly. How essential it is for every young man to have before him these spiritual objectives, either to become qualified as an overseer of the flock, or, at the very least, to be in later years a brother possessing the spiritual character here described. He should seek to become an adornment in the assembly of God!

The Adornment of Aged Women

The sisters of the assembly are responsible to be “in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women ...” (2:3-4). The character and ministry of older sisters adorn the assembly with spiritual beauty when they fulfil this work for God and His people. Every older sister in Christ should endeavour by God’s grace to have such an influence upon her younger sisters that by example and teaching, she may set before them spiritual lessons that produce blessing for the assembly and glory for the Lord.

The Adornment of Young Women

Aged sisters should instruct younger ones “to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed” (2:4-5). The prominent place for this to be done is the Christian home, rather than the assembly itself. Nevertheless, in that hallowed sphere, her ministry is great, and it produces for the glory of God a beautiful adornment in the assembly. The character of the Christian home always brings either blessing or loss to the assembly testimony. Every young sister may set her heart upon God’s ideal place for her, seeking to fulfil

her ministry and to become a true “mother in Israel” in the days of her maturity. This will truly magnify God’s holy Word in her life.

The Adornment of Young Men

Young men are exhorted “to be sober minded.” Titus was told to shew himself, in all things, “a pattern of good works; in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (2:6-8). Their responsibility to adorn the testimony for God’s glory is plainly presented. Beloved young brother, seek to be faithful to God’s word and by His grace, do your part in adorning the assembly with spiritual beauty.

The scriptures did not directly advocate the abolition of slavery, but exhorted believing servants to prove by their godliness, honesty, and faithful testimony, that their character and conduct adorned the assembly of God. Regardless of their unfortunate circumstances, the essential thing for them, as for all, was to prove that Christ in His beauty could be reproduced in the believer’s life by the Spirit of God, to make the testimony of God on Crete one of spiritual wonder. How great is God’s plan to develop spiritual character in the lives of His people, irrespective of their outward circumstances!

The Complete Beauty of it all

Thus, by their spiritual character and obedience to the Word of God, elders, aged men, aged women, young women, young men, and even slaves, would “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (2:10). This is

the paramount beauty of a local assembly of saints and a joy to the heart of God when fulfilled. Nothing upon the earth is more precious to God than this spiritual glory of His Assembly. Are we all doing our part, old and young, brother and sister? God grant that we shall be properly exercised to do this!

How It Can Be Done

How this can be accomplished is also revealed (2:11-13). The dark background of the Cretians by nature is graphically recorded by Paul in the words of one of their own prophets: "Cretians are always liars, evil wild beasts, lazy gluttons" (1:12, J.N.D. trans.) What power could ever transform such a people into an adornment of spiritual beauty and character? Nothing but the grace of God!

First, they received The Gift of God's grace in salvation. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared" (2:11). Salvation is the foundation of all things for the saints. That is where God begins to form His assembly, by bringing men and women into a knowledge of sins forgiven and the joy of salvation, brought to us in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His wondrous grace, God saved us too, thus laying the foundation of a testimony He could develop for His glory and beauty.

Second, they came under The Discipline of God's Grace, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (2:12). The word "teaching" literally means "training". How wonderful that the grace of God can thus train His children to live! The believer's life is his contribution of beauty to the assembly of God.

Should we not place ourselves constantly under the discipline of God's grace that we may be taught how to live? A brother once said, "The world is the best place God has to make a Christian." "In this present world," the grace of God can teach us how to live for His glory, thus forming a character that will properly adorn the assembly for His honour.

Third, they also possessed The Hope of God's grace: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (2:13). How that blessed hope and consummation provides an incentive for holy living, purifying the motives and the lives of His people! "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John 3:2-3).

Thus the grace of God was sufficient to develop the Cretian believers in their spiritual character for the adornment of their assembly in that day. Is not His grace sufficient for us today? Certainly it is! Young and old in the assembly of God should recognize and obey the scriptural instruction of adorning the assembly in their respective places for His glory. Beloved young believer, the grace of God is able to fulfil this in you.

The Attractiveness Of Christ

The Attractiveness Of Christ

John W. Bramhall

Mr. John W. Bramhall, who was commended to the work of the Lord in 1934 and makes his home in Charlotte, N.C., is a frequent contributor to Focus.

In this warm devotional study he shows how certain individuals were attracted to Christ. In so doing he helps the reader appreciate more fully our altogether lovely Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:15-16; John 1:35-39; 12:32-33; 19:35-42; Acts 7:55-56 In the five selected Scripture portions above there are various ways in which certain individuals were attracted to Christ. They have their application for our hearts today that we, too, may be drawn closer to Him. C.H. Mackintosh wrote: "The Person of Christ is the perfect object for the heart." How true and important this is. Let us note, then, the above incidents for our encouragement.

Attracted to Christ by His Birth

The angelic "birth announcement" by the heavenly hosts impelled the shepherds to say to one another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." What a priceless privilege was theirs to be the first to gaze upon "Emmanuel ... God with us," and this, on the very day of His earthly birth! These humble shepherds honoured the

mighty Creator when born, while all the world lay in darkness and ignorance of His entrance into this earthly scene.

Simeon later held the Christ-child in his arms and gazed upon his salvation. Anna, the prophetess, came into the temple to contribute her thanksgiving for Him and told of Him to all who were looking for redemption in Jerusalem. The wise men came from afar to worship Him who was “born King of the Jews”. All these were attracted to Him at His birth. How much there is for us to meditate upon from the Word of God in relation to the Lord of Glory who came to earth and was manifested in the flesh! Wondrous mystery! (1 Timothy 3:16).

Attracted to Christ by His Walk

It was when John the Baptist was “looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.” These words attracted Andrew and John to Christ, and “they followed Jesus.” The perfect walk of the Lamb of God upon the earth caused them to seek His blessed Person and His abode, leading them on toward the heavenly home above from whence He came and to which He returned. How blest a home!

Are we attracted to Christ by His walk? Do we follow the lowly and perfect path of the Son of God, noting from the inspired record how He walked? What lessons there are for us if we will study the path of Christ from the manger to the cross, the only example for us to follow. It was ever a path that led downward, a path of humiliation that brought Him ultimately to “the death of the cross” (see Philippians 2:5-8). We should be attracted to Him by His walk and seek to “follow His

steps" (1 Peter 2:21). Let us study His walk and be more attracted to His blessed Person.

Attracted to Christ by His Death

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me... signifying what death He should die" (John 12:32-33). With millions of others, we realize that we were first attracted to Him by His atoning and vicarious death. Christ points to His crucifixion by using the same expression spoken to Nicodemus in John 3:14 & 15. Crucified, He has become the great center of attraction, drawing to Himself multitudes from all peoples, nations and countries, delivering them from the power of Satan, sin, death and hell.

These words may even look further, when on the basis of His death and His future exaltation, "every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father" (Philippians 2:10-11). Yet we must not assume that these words support the deadly heresy of a universal salvation that all men shall actually be saved.

Is there any subject that touches the heart of a believer so deeply than the thoughts of His death? Shall we ever be able to comprehend the fulness of His love and grace that was perfectly displayed toward us by the cross? Not alone in the weekly remembrance of the Lord's Supper, but each moment of life our hearts can dwell upon the wonder of His love that is revealed in the cross.

Death, death of stricken love, wrath's sea exploring!

Death, Life's mysterious death—Deep mounting deep!

Death, whence Thy bursting heart fills ours out-pouring
All, all in worship — Lord — low at Thy feet!|

Attracted to Christ by His Burial

Have you noticed that in the account of the Saviour's burial only two men and two women are mentioned as attendants to His funeral? They were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus; and the two Marys (see Matthew 27:61). How remarkable that the men had been secret disciples to the time of His death, but when His precious body hung lifeless on the cross they openly demanded of Pilate to be given the custody of His body for burial, when all His professing disciples, for above all others Joseph and Nicodemus valued the blessed body of their Lord and tenderly taking it down from the cross, they cleansed it for burial and wrapped it "in linen clothes with the spices" (John 19:38-40). Thus the Scripture was carefully fulfilled of Him: "And men appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death" (Isaiah 53:9, JND). This will be eternally remembered by God..

However, we know it was but an interrupted funeral, for "death could not keep its prey." What an attachment these two men and two women manifested to even the lifeless body of their blessed Lord and Saviour! What are our thoughts concerning this? Sacred and precious thoughts can be ours if we will dwell upon the amazing fact of our Saviour's body being lifeless between His death and His resurrection. His spirit and soul were in the unseen realm of the dead, while His precious body lay lifeless in the tomb. Has there ever been such an historic event and tremendous fact of divine history

embraced in this experience of Christ, the Son of God, being in death? And all for our salvation!

Attracted to Christ in Glory

The last Scripture reveals Stephen being stoned to death by his persecutors; yet not even the violent circumstances surrounding his martyrdom could prevent him “being full of the Holy Spirit” and “looking up steadfastly into heaven” to see “the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). Even in death, His heart was attracted to Christ in glory. “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God” was his triumphant cry. What a vision was his! The glorified Christ was seen waiting to receive him. “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” he said. And again, “Lay not this sin to their charge,” as he prayed for his enemies. What mattered the suffering and the cruelty heaped upon his body! The heavens were opening and his heart was completely occupied with Christ above in glory. Heaven was completely attracting him to the glorious Person of his risen, ascended, and now glorified Lord.

What about us beloved? Will Christ in glory be our attraction in death? Will we be attracted to Christ in glory when that moment comes? Why not? One truth is certain, if we make Him our attraction during life, then He certainly will be the same for us in death.

Should we not be completely attracted to Christ by His birth, by His walk, by His death, by His burial; and at the journey’s end be attracted to Christ in glory? Forever in eternal glory when with Him through endless ages we shall be occupied with His blessed Person and attracted to Him eternally! Is He not worthy of this now?

Yes, "the Person of Christ is the perfect object for the heart."

O patient, spotless One!

Our hearts in meekness train

To bear Thy yoke and learn of Thee;

That we may rest obtain.

Saviour! Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill;

Thy life, to calm the anxious soul,

Thy love its fear dispel.

O fix our earnest gaze.

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see.

The Bitter Made Sweet

Vol 5:10 (Oct 1959)

The Bitter Made Sweet

John Bramhall

“The waters of Marah were bitter... the waters were made sweet” (Exod. 15:23-25).

The slavery of Egypt was over. Pharaoh’s evil host was drowned in the sea. A song of triumph rose from joyous hearts. The Israelites were well on their way to the promised land (Exod. 12-15).

For three days they travelled before finding water — only to discover that the water was bitter and unfit for drinking! How discouraging! How disappointing! (Exod. 15:22-25).

However, the Lord solved their problem. He showed Moses a tree, and told him to throw it in the water. When this was done, the water became sweet. How encouraging! How refreshing!

“Now all these things happened to them as types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come” (1 Cor. 10:11. J.N.D. Tr.).

The Israelites’ journey through the desert, from Egypt to Canaan, entailed a great variety of hardships. These are all typical of Christians’ experiences today as we travel through the world, seeking to enjoy our promised blessings in Christ, while looking forward to our safe arrival in His presence.

From Israel's distress at Marah, we can learn practical lessons for ourselves. What God did then, He is still able to do for us now. Through the greatness of His love and grace, He is able to sweeten all our bitter "waters of Marah", even today!

The Bitter Waters of Sin

Where does God begin His ministry of sweetness to our souls? Every believer can recall the days of deep conviction, when the Spirit of God plowed into the conscience and produced the bitter taste of sin and guilt. This caused us to cry unto the Lord for salvation.

The Lord showed us "a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Blessed cross! Blessed Sacrifice! Blessed Saviour! He poured His love and grace into our wounded souls, washing away our sin and guilt before a holy God, cleansing us through His precious blood!

"He cleansed the bleeding sin-wounds and poured in oil and wine; He whispered to assure me, 'I've found thee; thou art Mine.' I never heard a sweeter voice; it made my aching heart rejoice."

He transformed the bitter waters of sin and guilt into the sweetness of His cleansing and pardon.

The Bitter Water of Defeat

On starting our heavenly pilgrimage, elated with the joy of salvation, we were perhaps surprised to find that the sources where we had drunk with delight once before, had now run dry. Possibly we had not yet realized that the world had become a desert to us. However, God must teach us the blessedness of this fact, in order that

we may be brought to say, "All my springs are in Thee" (Psa. 87:7).

Neither did we realize, perchance, how great were the dangers of "the flesh" and "the devil"; but God ever seeks to bring us into practical conformity with our new position in Christ; and He therefore permits us to experience the bitter waters of failure and defeat.

Paul tasted the bitter struggle between the two natures within him: the sinful old man with which he was born; and the new man which he acquired at the time of his second birth. In bitterness and misery he cried, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). The Lord showed him a tree, and we hear Paul say victoriously, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. 7:25); so he passed into the joy of victory, the triumph of a Spirit-controlled life as described in Romans 8. Instead of the bitter waters of defeat, he was enabled to partake of the sweetness of victory.

The Bitter Waters of Discouragement

The sources of discouragement are varied: pain, sickness, sorrow, bereavement, and other trials. These often produce the unfortunate spirit of murmuring which characterized Israel at Marah: "The people murmured." Consider the discouragement caused by pain, and God's antidote for it.

Sitting by a dying saint suffering intensely with cancer of the throat, I ventured to say, "The pain must be unbearable, sister." She sweetly answered, "When I think of what my Saviour suffered for me on the cross, it

helps me to bear the pain." The Lord showed her "a tree", and "the waters were made sweet."

Similarly, God is still sufficient for sickness, sorrow, and all the other trials which cause "the bitter waters" to come into our souls. Paul wrote of his own case, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And HE said unto me, MY grace is sufficient for thee: for MY strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:8-10). Instead of the bitter waters of weakness, through the ever-present grace of Christ he received the sweet waters of divine sufficiency!

The Bitter Waters of Disappointment

There are two chief sources of disappointment in our lives: people and circumstances. How bitter can be the deep wounds of disillusionment when those whom we trusted eventually fail us! We all taste this experience, for none is perfect. What shall we do? Give vent to our deep emotions in bitterness of spirit? God forbid!

Paul wrote about his own experiences in similar circumstances, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). "Demas hath forsaken me" (2 Tim. 4:10). "ALL men forsook me. I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge" (2 Tim. 4:16).

But, "the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet." Listen to his triumph, "NOTWITHSTANDING THE LORD STOOD WITH ME, AND STRENGTHENED ME" (2 Tim. 4:17-18).

Have your plans and prospects also failed you? What does it matter about mere things? What if you and I could lose HIM? Thank God, we cannot! for He abideth faithful! Let the Lord show you HIMSELF, the ever-sufficient One! and then you will be able to sing:

“HE is not a disappointment! Jesus is far more to me Than in all my glowing day-dreams I had fancied He could be; And the more I get to know HIM, so the more I find HIM true; And the more I long that others should be led to know HIM too.”

From the bitter waters of disappointment, He brings us to the sweetness of HIMSELF!

The Bitter Waters of Death

If our Lord be not come, the last experience of the pilgrim will be death. And yet, surely the same blessed One Who sweetens every other trial of life, will also be there to sweeten the last testing that earth may hold for His own. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Psa. 116:15).

The Lord showed Moses “a tree”, a beautiful figure of Him Who in infinite grace was cast into the bitter waters of death, in order that those waters might yield naught but sweetness for us forever! We can truly say, “The bitterness of death is past” and nothing remains for us but the eternal sweetness of resurrection life!

If the experience of death must be ours, we shall but pass into the sweetness of His eternal presence and see Him face to face. Then again, His imminent return may completely eliminate the bitter waters of death, if we are “alive and remain” when He descends from above to

gather us home! In either case, He is nothing but sweetness to the soul!

If God ever brings us to a Marah, let us always remember that He has gone there before us and planted a sweetening tree within easy reach: the present sufficiency and preciousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is more than equal to our deepest need, praise His holy Name! The tree is symbolical, not only of His blessed cross, but also of Himself. Whenever He is brought into our own bitter circumstances of life, He always makes the bitter waters sweet.

The Blessing of an Absent Christ

The Blessing of an Absent Christ

John W. Bramhall

Mr. John W. Bramhall, a resident of Charlotte, N. C., and an esteemed servant of the Lord, is a frequent contributor to Focus. In this helpful article, he reminds us of the rich spiritual blessings which are ours as a result of Christ having enshrined Himself invisibly at the right hand of God the Father.

Have we fully appreciated the meaning of our Saviour's words when He said to His disciples, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7)? The announcement of His departure to the Father in preceding chapters had produced great sorrow of heart to the disciples. His coming absence troubled them greatly and now He tells them it would be more profitable for them to be without His bodily presence on the earth. Do we have greater blessings because of this today? Let us consider in quiet meditation some reasons for His absence.

His Presence Is Nearer

In Christ's incarnate flesh we know He was confined to one locality at a time when on earth. Now, He is beyond the boundaries of time and sense, filling all things above and is accessible by faith and prayer to all of His own (Ephesians 1:22-23). We all have access into His immediate presence today no matter where on earth we

live. Furthermore, His presence with us is also assured, for as He not said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20; see also Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 13:5-6). Is it not true today that we can know the preciousness in our daily walk of those words recorded in Luke 24:15, saying "that Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them"? Though absent from earth, there is not a child of God in the whole world out of His reach; to every one of His own His presence is nearer!

His Godhead Is Clearer

There were occasions when the hearts and minds of our Lord's disciples who walked with Him could not grasp His great Godhead as He walked and lived with them each day. Occasional glimpses of His glorious deity were visible to their eyes, but often the question was raised, "What manner of Man is this?" (Mark 4:41). Yet when His resurrection and exaltation in Heaven was established, beyond all controversy His glorious deity was more fully comprehended by His disciples than if He had stayed upon the earth. All the subsequent ministry and writings of His apostles indicate that to them His absolute Godhead was better understood. Then He was "declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). When Christ took His place "on the right hand of the majesty on high," then they knew with absolute assurance that He was "higher than the angels" (see Hebrews 1:3-5). For them, and for us today, His Godhead is clearer!

His Salvation Is Surer

How precious to know the strong and eternal assurance we now have concerning Christ's perfect redemption that is ours, all because He is absent from earth and present in Heaven. The evidence is perfect that His redemptive work is complete. Listen to the words of Hebrews 10:12 and 14: "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God... For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." Again, "He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). Yes, because He is there in Heaven, His great salvation is surer!

His Heaven Is Dearer

There would be no attraction to the Father's home above if Christ had stayed on the earth among men; but by His presence above He is the greatest attraction there to the hearts of His own. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3; see also 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 5:6-14). All the outward display of Heaven's glory cannot compare with the preciousness of His blessed Person. He Himself will be the centrality of all the heavenly glories. Beloved Samuel Rutherford has well written his conviction of this, saying: "I would be in Heaven, if I had no other reason but to see that golden Ark, and God inhabiting a body such as we sinners have, that I might adore Him forevermore." Is not this our conviction, too?

Though we have loved ones in His presence above waiting for the glad reunion of saints at His coming when we shall see them again, yet without Him being

there it never could be Heaven either for them or for us. Because He is not here, but there, our departed saints are enjoying Him. To them Heaven is dearer, and for us who await the glad day when we too shall be taken home to glory, it is also blessedly true — His Heaven is dearer!

His Church Is Richer

Our Lord Jesus Christ's departure has not robbed us at all, but has made us richer on the earth because of the indwelling presence and the power of His Holy Spirit. Did He not say, "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you" (John 16:7)? Has He not kept this promise? Has He not sent an equally divine Person who is not limited to the body of humanity as our Saviour was? One whose presence is not only with us but in us? The Church is richer because of the coming of the Holy Spirit to the earth, coming at Pentecost and continuing with the Church until the blessed rapture of the saints.

With the redemption work now fully completed by Christ, the presence now of the Holy Spirit on the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ can now in the most blessed and intimate manner bring our hearts into all the eternal values that flow from Christ and His work, all that is now ours in an exalted Christ in Heaven above. It is His delight to reveal to us God the Father's estimation of His Son who is in Heaven. This could never be done until our Lord's absence from the earth and His presence in Heaven. It was a necessary change of ministry, changing it from the visible to the invisible, from the earthly to the heavenly, from the external to the internal, and from the occasional to the perpetual. For all of this has the Holy

Spirit been given to bring to the hearts of His own what we have in that blessed Man in the glory.

Properly has the Apostle Paul written: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). All those unsearchable riches in Christ that are ours now should be enjoyed by us on the earth. This could never have been possible had it not been necessary for that blessed Man to be absent from the earth and present in Heaven above.

“He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:14-15). The riches of His Church are not measured by earthly standards, but only by the heavenly — they are all in that Man in the glory at the right hand of God! But the Revealer of all those riches in Him is the Holy Spirit of God Himself. There is no doubt that Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, delighted in telling Rebecca, the espoused wife of Isaac, of his master’s riches as they travelled the long desert journey toward the land of Canaan. Does the Holy Spirit have the present delight and opportunity to speak to our hearts of our riches in that blessed One in Heaven above? As we travel through this wilderness, are we enjoying our riches in that exalted Lord in Heaven? God grant that we are and that we shall do so more and more.

This world is a wilderness wide,

I have nothing to seek or to choose;

I’ve no tho’t in the waste to abide;

I've naught to regret or to lose.
The path where my Saviour is gone,
Has led up to His Father and God;
To the place where He's now on the throne,
And His strength shall be mine on the road.
— J. N. Darby

The Brevity of Life

The Brevity of Life

John Bramhall

Another year has gone; a new year has come—reminding us again that time is passing and that life is brief. A year is shorter than we think. The time we have for serving Christ is slipping away from us all.

Life Is But A Tale

“We spend our years as A TALE that is told” (Ps. 90:9). It does not take long to tell “a tale”; the end of the story soon comes. Such is our brief life! Darby’s New Translation is even more revealing: “We spend our years as a passing thought.”

Life Is But A Pilgrimage

“We are strangers before Thee, and SOJOURNERS, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as A SHADOW, and there is none abiding” (1 Chron. 29:15). Life is a short journey; a brief pilgrimage through this world. It is like a moving shadow that quickly flits across the sands of time.

Life Is But An Handbreadth

“Behold, Thou hast made my days as AN HANDBREADTH, and mine age is as NOTHING before Thee” (Ps. 39:5). God quickly answered David’s prayer “to know the measure” of his days (Ps. 39:4). Contrasted to Eternity, it was only the width of his hand! Contrasted to the existence of an Eternal Being, David’s age was “as nothing”.

Life Is But A Vapour

“For what is your life? It is even A VAPOUR, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14). “Not that brief,” you say! Yes, that is what God says it is in relation to Eternity. At your next opportunity, watch the rise of vapour and its quick disappearance from sight. This is “your life”.

Life Is But A Flower

“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like A FLOWER, and is cut down” (Job. 14:1-2). Brief, but troubled, was Job’s comment on life; often this is our judgment too. Life is like A FLOWER: now budding, then blooming, but suddenly — gone! “Cut down!” It matters not which flower we may be; “the flower” we cherish, nourish, and admire, is very soon gone!

Life Is But A Tent

“For we who are in THIS TENT sigh under our burden” (2 Cor. 5:4 — Confrat. Trans.). Note the full context of this chapter and verse, to realize that the human body is no more than a temporal dwelling for the spirit and soul — just a TENT! Nothing permanent about that! It is a vulnerable dwelling which soon shows the signs of wear and tear from the experiences of life. The believer’s permanent “house from Heaven” is eternal, a new body of glory; but this present one is only A TENT, possibly with patches and stitches showing also! Its survival of life’s storms can only be brief at the best.

Life Is But Grass

“All flesh is GRASS, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower

fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is GRASS" (Isa. 40:6-7). The scorching sun and the freezing cold both blight the tender grass, withering it away. How quickly it is destroyed! Everything in life may look green, but one blast from the breath of God can soon take us a-way! How uncertain is our life!

Thus the Holy Scriptures vividly and accurately describe THE BREVITY OF LIFE in contrast to Eternity and the Eternal One. Let us acknowledge the truth of God's Word with a deeper and more earnest realization.

Furthermore, let us assimilate these truths into our hearts; and let us realize the lessons taught, and apply them in each of our fleeting lives!

Some Christians live for the pleasures of this life alone, carelessly indifferent to eternal things. This is wasteful and disastrous. All that the world holds for the gratifying of human desire is momentary. The world congratulates you if you live for self. Not so your Saviour! "For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it" (Mk. 8:35). The world condemns you if you live for Eternity. Not so your Saviour! "Whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it" (Mk. 8:35). Which world are you living for, this or the next? Life is short! Are we LOSING it or SAVING it?

Let us also remember that while the pleasures of life are momentary, so are our troubles. Often we unduly magnify them, but we should not. Compared with Eternity and its glory, they are only a momentary experience: "our light affliction ... is but for a moment" (2 Cor. 4:17). The brevity of life should enable us to minimize our troubles for the glory of God.

Besides, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

What a lesson in contrasts: "light affliction" and "weight of glory"; one is "for a moment" and the other "eternal". There are "the things which are seen" and "the things which are not seen"; the former being "temporal", and the latter, "eternal".

On the short pathway of life, which "things" are our eyes focussed upon? The "temporal" or the "eternal"? It is a challenge to us; the brevity of life should stimulate us to live for eternal glory rather than for earthly things. Let us permit the Spirit of God to inscribe this blessed truth upon our hearts and lives: the really important things in this brief life, are those things which are eternal!

The Brevity of Life

The Brevity of Life

John Bramhall

John Bramhall needs no introduction to our readers; for years we have enjoyed and have been helped by the devotional ministry he gives. The new year is another reminder of the brevity of life. Let us take to heart the counsel he gives.

Over the triple doorways of Milan Cathedral there are three inscriptions spanning the splendid arches. Above one is carved a wreath of roses and underneath is the legend: "All that Pleases is but for a Moment." Over the Second is sculptured a cross and underneath are the words: "All that Troubles is but for a Moment." While underneath the great central entrance to the main aisle of the Cathedral is the inscription: "That Only is Important which is Eternal." The brevity of life in contrast to eternal things should constantly be realized. The Bible states:

Life is but a Tale: "We spend our years as a TALE that is told" (Psa. 90:9). It does not take long to spin "a tale" and the end of the story comes. Such is our brief life! The Hebrew text is more revealing in the New Translation, J.N.D.: "We spend our years as a passing thought." It may be many years to us, but in contrast to eternity it is only "a passing thought". HOW BRIEF!

Life is but a Pilgrimage: "For we are strangers before Thee, AND SOJOURNERS, as were all our fathers, our days on earth are as A SHADOW, and there is none abiding" (1 Cron. 29:15). A short journey; a brief

pilgrimage through this world; like a moving shadow that quickly flits across the sands of time, HOW BRIEF!

Life is but a Handbreadth: “Be hold, thou has made my days as a HANDBREADTH, and mine age is as NOTHING before Thee” (Psa. 39:5). God quickly answered David’s desire “to know the measure” of his days (Psa. 39:4). Contrasted to eternity, the width of his hand! Contrasted to an Eternal Being — “as nothing!” HOW BRIEF!

Life is but a Vapour: “For what is your life? It is even a VAPOUR, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jas. 4:14). Not that brief you say! That is what God says it is in relation to eternity. The next opportunity, watch the rise of vapour and its quick disappearance from sight. This is “your life” and HOW BRIEF!

Life is but a Flower: “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a FLOWER, and is cut down” (Job 14:1, 2). Brief, but troubled, was Job’s comment of life and often is our judgment too. Like A FLOWER, now budding, then blooming but suddenly gone! “Cut down!” It matters not which flower you may be like, (from daisies to orchids!)’ yet “the flower” we cherish, nourish and admire is soon gone! It’s duration — HOW BRIEF!

Life is but a A TENT: “For we who are in THIS TENT sigh under our burden” (2 Cor. 5:4 — Confraternity translation). Note the context of this chapter from verse 1, etc. and realize that your body and mine are no more than a temporal dwelling for the spirit and soul, just A TENT! Nothing permanent about that! A vulnerable structure that soon shows the signs of wear and tear

from the experiences of life. The believer's permanent "house from Heaven" is eternal, a new body of glory, but this present one is only A TENT possibly with patches and stitches showing also! As far as its survival of life's storms — HOW BRIEF!

Life is but as Grass: "All flesh is AS GRASS, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth and the flower fadeth; because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it; surely the people is GRASS" (Isa. 40:6, 7). The scorching sun and the cold of winter both blight the tender grass, withering it away. How quickly it is destroyed! Everything may look green in life, but one blast from the breath of God can soon take us away! How uncertain life is and HOW BRIEF!

Thus the Holy Scriptures vividly and accurately describe the BREVITY OF LIFE in contrast to Eternity and One who is an Eternal Being. Let us acknowledge the truth of God's Word with deeper realization of life's brevity compared with Eternity!

The application of these truths should be realized and the lessons taught us assimilated into our hearts. The inscriptions over the triple doorways of Milan Cathedral are amplified by the Scriptures touched on. Let us consider them:

(a) "All that pleases is but for a moment" — Living for the pleasures of this life alone, carelessly indifferent to eternal things, can be disastrous and wasteful. All that the world holds for the gratifying of human pleasure is but a momentary object. The world congratulates you on your achievement of wealth and honor, if you live for self! Not so your Saviour! "For whosoever shall desire to save his life shall lose it!" (Mk. 8:35 New Trans.). The

world condemns and reproaches if you live for Eternity and value eternal things! Not so your Saviour!

“Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it!” (Mk. 8:35). Which world are you living for, this or the next? Life is short for us! Are we really losing or saving it?

“All that troubles is but for a moment” — Not only should the pleasures of life be realized as a momentary object, but also our troubles! Often we may unduly magnify them but we should not. Compared with Eternity and eternal glory, God says they are a momentary experience: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment” (2 Cor. 4:17). The inscription over the Cathedral door is according to Scripture truth. The brevity of life, contrasted with Eternity, should enable us to minimize our troubles for the glory of God!

“That only is important which is eternal” — Here the proper emphasis on our life is rightly placed. This is according to Holy Scripture and is divine encouragement to us. Read carefully the context of 2 Corinthians 4:15-18 and you will find the true perspective upon life revealed. Part of it reads as follows: “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory: While we look not at the things which are seen, but, at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal!”

What a lesson of contrast: “light affliction” and “weight of glory”; one is “for a moment” and the other “eternal”; one is “light” and the other “exceeding heavy.” Note the contrasts between “the things that are seen” and “the

things that are not seen.” The former are “temporal” and the latter are “eternal.” Whether pleasure or troubles they are a passing experience. The old colored brother was not far from the truth when he deliberated over his troubles in life and said he was truly thankful for the oft repeated phrase in Scripture — “And it came to pass.” He then realized that his troubles had not come to stay! It was not a bad philosophy in life at all and something perhaps of which we all need more.

So in your pathway and mine, in this brief life which things are our eyes centred upon? The temporal or the eternal? It is a challenge for us and the brevity of life should stimulate us to live for eternal glory rather than earthly things. Let us permit the Spirit of God to inscribe deeply into our hearts and lives the blessed truth: “That Only is Important Which is Eternal.”

“Take my life, and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
“Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, ALL for Thee.”

The Bright and Morning Star

The Bright and Morning Star

John Bramhall

“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”—Revelation 22:16.

In this passage of Holy Writ there is a threefold presentation of Christ, a presentation which reveals the glorious titles of our Lord in relation to the world, Israel, and the Church.

He is presented as Jesus to the world; a name that holds the blessing of eternal salvation to all, for it means Saviour (Matt. 1:21). How the world today needs the value of this name, for “Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

He is presented as The Root and Offspring of David to Israel, the One Who as David’s Lord and David’s Son (Psa. 110:1) will bring to fruition all the covenant promises of God to Israel. He alone will establish the godly remnant of Israel in the perpetual glory of their King and kingdom.

He is presented as The Bright Morning Star to the Church. His blood bought Bride. This is a title of special affection for the saints today, cheering our hearts and encouraging our spirits while the shadows of moral and spiritual apostasy deepen around us. There are three Scriptures that alone give reference to this special title

of our Lord, and they are worthy of our earnest consideration:

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19). Two facts herein are revealed: First, the prophetic word is like a lamp which lightens the moral and spiritual darkness of earth, exposing its corruption of evil everywhere. Yet all prophecy points to the dawn of a new day for the earth, when our Lord Jesus Christ will appear in great power and glory. In second place, the Day Star (Morning Star) is revealed, telling us much more; it tells the heart that the day of glory is nearing. This Morning Star is the harbinger of a new day. As the morning star shines in the darkness just before the dawning of the day, so the word of prophecy brightly shines its message of hope in our hearts in spite of the increasing gloom of this godless age. The Lord is coming soon! Hallelujah! If the prophetic word fixes our hopes and affections upon Christ alone, rather than the dawn of the new day, then the Day Star has truly arisen in our hearts.

“And I will give to him the bright and morning star” (Rev. 2:28). In the letter to the Church of Thyatira, the Lord reveals that the sad condition of spiritual evil is of such a character that no promise is given for recovery before the Lord comes. To the overcomer is promised glorious rewards, authority and power over the nations of the world with Christ in His coming reign. Yet the Lord supplements even this with an additional honour, saying, “And I will give him the Morning Star.”

The glory and honour of the coming kingdom is not the complete satisfaction for the believer's heart, for there is a greater satisfaction than even the Kingdom of Glory, The Morning Star, Christ Himself. What a blessed incentive kingdom truth is for the believer, but greater than that in the midst of ecclesiastical and moral darkness today, is the glory of what Christ Himself is to the overcomer's heart. The person of Christ alone fully can satisfy the heart. Let us now consider the verse which appears at the head of this article.

The Old Testament closes by presenting Christ as "The Sun of Righteousness" Who will rise "with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2), chasing away the darkness, sorrow, pain, sickness, and death; the world yet will see that day. The New Testament closes by presenting Christ as "The Bright and Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16), but the world will be asleep and never will see this Star (1 Thess. 5:5-6). It is the Church alone, His Bride, that can know Him as the Bright and Morning Star. He is to be known by us as such first, before He shines as the Sun of Righteousness, for when the sun arises the stars go out. "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober", (1 Thess. 5:6).

Beloved, do you and I see Him as the Bright and Morning Star? Are our hearts in the midst of this world's darkness fixed upon Him alone? Dearer than all the glory of His coming kingdom, is the blessed and lovely person of Christ Himself; and if our hope and affections are upon Him alone, then the Day Star has arisen in our own hearts.

Before the shadows of the great tribulation deepen in their intense blackness upon the nations of this world,

with the out-pouring of God's wrath on this Christ-rejecting scene, you and I, beloved, will have heard His glad shout (1 Thess. 4:3-18), and shall meet Him in the skies to be forever with Him and like Him.

How satisfied we shall be! "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15). Yet do not forget that also in that same moment, the Spirit of God will present to Christ an object suitable and worthy of His love forever, the Church, His Bride, the perfect satisfaction of His heart.

Surely then, we rejoice that for the world, for Israel, and especially for the Church, Christ Himself is the hope alone to set all things right at His blessed return. May our hearts gladly give Him the place of the Bright and Morning Star in our affections, enabling us to say, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

The Cross Roads of Eternity

The Cross Roads of Eternity

John Bramhall

As we enter another year, we should carefully ponder this devotional article by John Bramhall, Charlotte, North Carolina. We have reached another important “cross road.”

One of the greatest crossroads of Christian experience is the last one in the normal course of events. The apostle Paul describes it when writing his own farewell to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy, “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim. 4:6). His faithful devotion to his blessed Master had brought him through many crucial experiences safely, but now the final one was “at hand” — his departure into eternity. The word “departure” is of a special significance in the Greek text and is the word “analuo.” It means “to unloose, or release; a metaphor that either is nautical, from loosing moorings preparatory to setting sail, or military, from breaking up an encampment.”

For the apostle it was launching into a new spiritual adventure, leaving the moorings of this life and setting sail toward the discoveries of eternal glories in another world far away from this present evil scene. He had previously expressed a longing to set out upon this journey to his beloved Philippian believers when torn between two desires, one to go and be with Christ, which was “far better”; and the other “to abide in the flesh” which seemed more necessary then for the saints

(Phil. 1:23, 24). However, now the moment was at hand and he joyfully writes, "The time of my release is come."

The occasion produces from his heart a concise and complete testimony of his Christian pilgrimage through the years past, together with a perfect assurance of what was before him as he sets sail into eternity. His brief statement concerning it is stated in few words: "I have combated the good combat, I have finished my race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7, 8). It was a satisfying retrospection of his life for Christ and a joyous anticipation of his future compensation, revealed to him right at the Crossroads of Eternity! Will it be ours? Meditate upon his words:

The Retrospection of the Past (2 Tim. 4:7): The substance of his words reveal a life of victory through all his Christian testimony:

(a) A Victorious Combat — "I have combated the good combat." The Christian warfare for all of us reveals a three-fold enemy: the world, the flesh and the devil (see 1 John 2:14-17; Romans 7:18 and Eph. 6:10-12). The world never conquered Paul, for he lived a life of victory over it (Gal. 6:14; John 16:33). The inward enemy of the flesh, so powerful in us, Paul crucified and conquered it! What a victory! (Rom. 7:24, 25; Gal. 2:20). The Devil, the great enemy of God and man, mighty but not almighty, became a defeated foe before Paul through the use of God given weapons for warfare! (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-18). The battle raged daily but Paul was a victor! Are we?

“Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength, and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life, and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally.”

(b) A Victorious Race (I have finished my race”). He was about to cross the “tape line” at the end of his last stretch toward home and his Master Who awaited him in glory! Others may have dropped out along the race in the Christian testimony but Paul ran right to the end of the allotted course. Will we? The secret of his victory is discovered in two facts (1) His spiritual condition. He kept himself “in the pink of condition,” spiritually, all the time. Physically, he often suffered weakness and infirmities, yet though the physical muscles and frame kept “perishing,” daily his spiritual strength increased: “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). Note his carelessness in this connection as stated in 1 Cor. 9:24-27. Let us not be more concerned about our physical man than the spiritual! (2) His spiritual objective. There is always a goal, a prize, at the end of the race and Paul knew the great prize for him at the end of life was a Christ in glory! (Phil 3:13, 14). No one running a race will run well if pre-occupied with what is on the side lines or what may be at the rear! We must keep our eyes upon the goal at the end, which for us is the Lord Himself—to see Him! Then “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking Unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith” (Heb. 12:1, 2).

“Run the straight race through God’s good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;

Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path, and Christ the prize."

(c) A Victorious Obedience — "I have kept the faith." We must not fail to realize the comprehensiveness of these five words. They reveal obedience to all the truth and the counsels of God as revealed in His Word! To the Elders at Ephesus Paul had said, "I have not shunned to declare unto you ALL the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) — and this statement is made by one who himself obeyed the truth that he preached to others. He sought all divine revelation in order to know what God required of him as an obedient servant, obeying the truth in each department of his life, publicly and privately. As the Lord said to Philadelphia, "Thou has kept My Word," so He could say to Paul the same commendation. This was victorious obedience, something greatly lacking today in the corporate testimony of the Church. How many of us are concerned to know All the will of God for us and do it, in corporate and individual responsibility?

"Faint not nor fear, His arm is near;
He changeth not and thou art dear.
Only believe, and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee."

The Anticipation of the Future (2 Tim. 4:8): The one who lives a life of victory, as Paul, will be confident of being acclaimed victor in eternity! Note this assurance:

(a) Paul's Confidence: "Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me." The eternal reward would but confirm that he had been right with God and had lived right for God. What a crown to covet! No greater honor can one receive "in that day" than to be

publicly approved as to one's testimony in life and that before all!

(b) Paul's Confessor: It will be "the Lord, the righteous JUDGE" who will render the vindication and the apostle patiently and confidently waited for it to be done in the future day of glory (see 1 Cor. 4:3-5 and 2 Tim. 1:12).

(c) Paul's Concern: "And not to me only but unto them also that love His appearing." His unselfish desire for others constrains him to encourage them to win the same triumph and glory as would be his. This is our opportunity; shall we seize it now?

"Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide;

His boundless mercy will provide.

Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove,

Christ is its life, and Christ its love."

The Deliverance of the Groaning Creation

The Deliverance of the Groaning Creation

John W. Bramhall

Mr. John W. Bramhall of Charlotte, N. C., whose study articles in the past have frequently appeared in the magazine, is still active in the Lord's work in a Bible teaching and writing ministry.

Romans 8:18-30

The doctrinal section of Romans extends from chapter 1 through chapter 8. Two distinct themes are given by the Spirit of God: God's justification of a sinner — Chapter 1 through 5:11. God's deliverance of a saint — 5:12 through 8:39. The last section can be subdivided as follows: Deliverance of a saint from sin's power — 5:12-6:23. Deliverance of a saint from the law — 7:1-8:10. The complete deliverance of a saint from sin's presence — at death or at Rapture by the "redemption of the body" — 8:11-30. The blessed conclusion for our eternal praise — 8:31-39. Until final deliverance, the groans of Creation will be heard on every hand, but when the Lord comes then will vanish away:

The Sufferings of this Present Time

Suffering today is inevitable! Sin is the cause and the whole human race is subjected to sickness, sorrow, grief, pain, etc. — each one in our own measure feeling sin's effect. Christians are also called upon to suffer for Christ during His rejection by the world; yet though this is our present time for sufferings, God has the final answer for

His children — it is glory! “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the coming glory to be revealed to us” (Rom. 8:18, JND).

God reveals three depths of human suffering in Exodus 3:7: There is suffering that is seen — “I have surely seen the affliction of My people.” We see much of this around us — but God sees all! There is suffering that is deeper — felt —but not seen: “I have heard their cry.” God realizes this by the outpoured words of the lips expressing the inner feelings of the heart. There is suffering that is deepest; it is unseen and not uttered, lying deep in the sufferer’s heart. Yet God says, “I know their sorrows.” Whatever the depth of it and by whatever channel — spiritual, mental, or physical —God knows! God loves! God cares!

The Groans of This Present Time

Within Romans 8, from verses 22 to 26, we hear three kinds of groans:

The groans of Creation — “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (v. 22). The literal creation (other than man) became subject to vanity — to death, but not willingly (v. 20). Creation is neither in its original creation nor in its final condition. It is a groaning creation, all out of adjustment, manifesting that all is in discord between earth and Heaven. It groans! — for “All the voices of nature are in the minor key” because of the sin of man.

The groans of the Christian — “Even we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also ourselves groan in ourselves, waiting for the adoption” (v. 23). Suffering

saints are in pain, grief, and sorrow everywhere, their groans expressing the longing for final deliverance. Exercised and concerned believers look across the world of political, ecclesiastical, and moral chaos and groan with deep yearning for that deliverance which the coming of the Lord will bring.

The groans of the Holy Spirit — “The Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (v. 26). No believer is able to comprehend the unspeakable sorrow and suffering in the world, nor the immensity of the great need around us, because of our infirmities. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought” and how often in our emergencies we realize this; but here is where the Spirit of God in His power comes in to meet the need, praise God! He takes up our weaknesses and makes intercession for us according to God’s perfect will and understanding (v. 27). He shares our longing and as long ago He “brooded upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2) over a past chaotic scene; so likewise today where human limitations are unable to express the immensity of the need, the Spirit of God can and does — a perfect Advocate!

The Time of Deliverance

For the Creation — It will be “the manifestation of the sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). “The creature...shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21, JND). Creation fell when man did (Gen. 3:17-19). It shall be restored when man is and then be no longer subject to vanity. The day of creation’s emancipation will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to set up His

kingdom. See Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:1-2; 55:13; 65:25. This is the “hope” of the literal creation (Rom. 8:19, 20).

For the Christian — The creation groans and the Christian groans, for both are looking for that which will bring each into right relation to the other. The Christian is “waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). This will be at the coming of the Lord, “Who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of [the] power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:21, JND). What a blessed prospect! Nearer than ever! (Rom. 13:11-12).

For the Spirit of God — His groans for us will also be over! He knows that the end is certain and the purposes of God all centre in His beloved Son. He knows that Christ is to be the “firstborn among many brethren” (v. 29), the Head of a new race of beings; but in that time surrounded by those who shall bear His image too! He knows that the saints are “predestinated [to be] conformed to the image of His Son” (v. 29). You can believe with all your soul in the predestination of saints! Note Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:11 — always referring to saints alone. So certain is the Spirit of God about the purposes of God that He has written, “Whom He has foreknown ... He has predestinated ... He has called ... He has justified [and] these also He has glorified.” He already sees it, as it were, fulfilled!

Our Present Consolation in Suffering

It is often true, as previously stated: “We do not know what we should pray for as we ought,” but what a blessed antithesis between the words “we know not” verse 26 and the words “we do know” in verse 28: “But

we do know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose" (JND). God is making all things work together for the good of His people for they are under His control and the Spirit knows this and so should we!

Furthermore, what three triumphant challenges the believer can confidently make! "Who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31). "Who shall condemn us?" (Rom. 8:34). "Who shall separate us?" (Rom. 8:35).

The purposes of our God for His beloved Son, and all the redeemed saints belonging to Him, are marching forward to a blessed and eternal conclusion! Our deliverance is sure — we are going from groans to glory! Blessed deliverance, may it be soon!

The whole creation groans, and waits to hear that voice, That shall restore her comeliness, and make her wastes rejoice. Come, Lord, and wipe away the curse, the sin, the stain, And make this blighted world of ours Thine own fair world again. Come, then, Lord Jesus, Come!

—Horatius Bonar

The End of the Wilderness Path

The terminal of our earthly pilgrimage is suitably described in the Song of Solomon, chapter 8 and verse 5, saying—"Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness leaning on her beloved?" Some believers have a deep realization of this being near for them, when they will be "with Christ—which is far better." (Phil. 1:23) Our text describes the manner in which the pilgrimage should end by leaning on our Beloved!

1. It is the edge of the wilderness—In looking back over the pilgrimage past, the wilderness character of this present world is vividly real, more so than in the previous years of life's journey. The soul is more keenly aware of the spiritual barrenness of this present scene of earth, that it is—"a dry and thirsty land where no water is." The poetical words of J.N. Darby have expressed to us this fact, saying —

This world is a wilderness wide

I have nothing to seek or to choose,

I've no thought in the waste to abide;'

I've nought to regret or to lose.

2. It is a time of complete dependence—In weakness the soul is "leaning on her Beloved"—leaning on the everlasting arms! In earlier days we leaned upon Him lightly, often relying on our own strength, but now, in conscious weakness the heart hears Him say—"Doest thou not know, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, Jehovah, the creator of the ends of the earth,

fainteth not nor tireth" (Isaiah 40:28) His strength alone upholds the soul!

The path where my savior has gone

Has led me up to His Father and God—

To the place where He's now on the throne,

And HIS strength shall be mine on the road.

3. It is a time of deepest love—The Beloved and His love is more magnified to the soul. The musing of the heart is—"I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine!" (S.S. 6:3) Surely HIS love becomes greater at the close of the pilgrim path for is it not true—"Love is as strong as death...many waters cannot quench love, neither do the floods drown it." (S.S. 8:6,7) Praise God that death cannot quench His love! His great love conquered death at Calvary with a mighty victory. Now He holds the keys of death and of hades. (Rev. 1:18) Therefore, at such a time as this His "perfect love casteth out fear." (1 John 4:18)

With Him shall my rest be on high

When in holiness bright I sit down—

In the joy of the love ever nigh—

In the peace that His presence shall crown

4. It is a time of promotion— "Up" and

"Out" of the wilderness for ever! What better direction can there be? The Beloved will escort me all the way! When the rich man of Luke, chapter 16, died—he was buried." What a tragic end! For when Lazarus died—He was "carried by the angels." What blessedness! One went down—the other went up! Yet for us, better than

being carried by the angels at our departure, we shall have the Beloved Himself taking us home at the end of the wilderness path! Thank God for angels and their ministry to the saints; but how much more precious for the believer to know the Beloved Himself will take us to Himself when He comes for us!

And Saviour, 'tis Thou from on high
I await till the time Thou shalt come
To take one Thou hast led by Thine eye—
To Thyself in the heavenly home!

J.N. Darby

The Expediency of The Lord's Departure

The Expediency of

The Lord's Departure

John Bramhall

Invariably John Bramhall arouses our imagination and spurs our thinking. This instructive article does both.

When the Saviour said to His disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away" (John 16:7), it was difficult for them to accept its truthfulness. His constant companionship during His earthly ministry with them, and their immediate expectation of His Kingdom, made His words appear incredible and impossible! How could His departure be for their profit? Nevertheless, subsequent history proved the truth of His words in a conclusive manner; not alone for them but for all of His own through the Christian age, It was expedient for us that He should leave this world and go to His Father! Why?

His Presence is Nearer

This may seem a contradiction but we must realize that when on the earth He was confined to one locality at a time. But Now He is beyond all boundaries of time and sense, filling all things above! See Ephesians 1:21-23; 4:10. Paul has written, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more" (2 Cor. 5:16). He is now the man in glory, who, in the Father's presence above, is accessible to all of His

own by faith and prayer. Each believer can lean “on Jesus’ bosom” if they will and be as close to Him as any other! (John 13:23). Our prayer should be “Nearer, still nearer! Close to Thy heart; Draw me, my Saviour so precious Thou art!” So for all of us His Presence is Nearer!

His Godhead Is Clearer

When the Saviour was on earth it was difficult for men to believe in His Godhead; that He was “GOD manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). But NOW — He is “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). Beyond all controversy, the resurrection and exaltation of Christ on high establishes the glorious fact of His Deity in a greater way than if He had stayed on the earth! See Philippians 2:9-11. It was expedient for Him to go away, for now, to all of His own — His Godhead is Clearer!

His Salvation is Surer

Having passed through the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24), we have Perfect Evidence that His redemptive work of salvation is complete! “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God ... for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that sanctified” (Heb. 10:12 and 14). (a) He is our great High Priest above — Heb. 4:14-16. (b) He is our great Intercessor (Heb. 7:25). (c) He is our great Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1, 2). We are convinced that His Salvation is Surer!

His Church is Richer

Had Christ not departed from the world, His people would still have been rich, but His departure, while not depriving us of His presence, has enriched His Church even more! (a) Through His present Headship over the Church, His place of authority as Head over His own house, “whose house are we” (Heb. 3:6). How rich we are! (b) Through His gifts to the Church as its risen Head how blest we are! — “From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Read the context of Ephesians 4:8-16. Are we enjoying these riches in a practical way? (c) Through His gift of the Holy Spirit: “For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you,” said the Lord (John 16:7). How rich we are with the presence and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the chief agent of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the earth now! Do we prove the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit? “The presence and the operation of the Holy Spirit is the Power of the assembly” (Wm. Kelly). (d) Through the completion of the Word of God. The final revelation of divine truth is “the Church”, committed in its stewardship to the Apostle Paul. Read very carefully Colossians 1:24-27. Note particularly verse 25:: “The Church, of which I became minister, according to the dispensation (stewardship) of God which is given me towards you to complete the word of God” (J. N. D. Translation). Not only do we have the complete body of Holy Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, but we have God’s final revelation of divine truth, “The mystery which has been

hidden from ages and from generations ... but now made manifest to His saints" (Col. 1:26 JND Trans.). How much do we value the riches of truth that God has now revealed? That blessed "mystery" for which the beloved Apostle Paul laboured, suffered and died! He had a two-fold objective in his ministry (1) "That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." (2) "And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ" — Read the context of Ephesians 3:1-11. These tremendous facts certainly confirm the expediency of our Lord's departure proving His Church is Richer!

Heaven Is Dearer

If Christ had lingered among men after rising from the dead, the Father's house, though still a certainty, would lack its greatest attraction! What is the most valued attraction for a believer in heaven? It is not the outward, incomprehensible glory of that blessed realm — God forbid! The dearest object for us to behold and to enjoy in the Father's house and through all eternity Is the Saviour Himself! How suitable are the words of Samuel Rutherford: — "I would be in heaven, suppose I had not another errand but to see that dainty golden Ark, and God inhabiting a body, such as we sinners have, that I might adore Him for evermore"... "For We Shall See Him as He Is!" are the inspired words of the apostle John (1 John 3:2). To see the eternal Son of God Who for my sake took upon Him the form of my humanity to redeem me; to see that glorious Person wearing humanity for ever! — will be greatest privilege and dearest attraction

in all heaven! To fall at His feet and worship Him with the redeemed hosts out of the ages of time and sing for ever that “new song” in the greatest anticipation of a believer’s heart! “And They Shall See His Face” is the Spirit of God’s expression of the eternal joy that will be ours through the endless ages of eternity! Yes! — it was expedient for HIM to go away, for now to all His own What shall it mean to waken in that Morning, When things of time and sense have passed away;

When sights and sounds of sin-born things which sadden, Have changed for life’s eternal, cloudless Day?

What shall it mean to waken in that Morning,

Where fears come not, and foes shall not be known;

Where needs and cares, and toil and test are ended;

Where heavenly peace, unbroken, reigns alone?

What shall it mean to waken in that Morning,

When with unhindered vision we behold

All that is meant by walls of shining jasper,

Life’s crystal river, and the streets of gold?

What shall it mean to see at last the Saviour,

He Who, in love for man, so freely died?

I shall awake that Morning in His likeness,

And, waking thus — I SHALL BE SATISFIED!

J. Danson Smith

We humbly, but gladly, say, “yes Lord, it was expedient for Thee to go away to Thy Father’s home above!” May we soon hear Thy voice calling us home that we may see Thy face for evermore!

The Glory of Submission

The Glory of Submission

John Bramhall

“The greatest mission in the world is SUB-mission.”

These words are attributed to J. Hudson Taylor, one of the greatest missionaries to China. There is a searching and challenging truth in them for each of our hearts.

The life that proves this truth will be lived for the glory of God. The Word of God exemplifies the statement in the life of our Lord and also in the lives of His servants.

Our Lord's Submission

His example is supreme and perfect! In His pre-existent glory He submitted to the will of His Father God, so that by incarnation and death He could accomplish the work of redemption. Here are His words to the Father before His humiliation: “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7).

In boyhood His submission to the will of God His Father was expressed by His obedience to Joseph and Mary.

“He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He was in subjection to them” (Luke 2:51, JND).

His submission to the baptism of John identified Him with the need of His people, Israel, although He Himself had no need for repentance (Matt. 3:13-17).

Christ also submitted to being “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil” (Matt. 4:1-11).

To all the demanding needs of humanity, He willingly and unsparingly devoted Himself, both for individuals and for multitudes (John 4:34. Mark 1:32-45).

The climax of His perfect submission came in Gethsemane and at Calvary! It was there that He said, "Nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). Its finality was reached on the cross, when having borne all our sins and guilt, He exclaimed, "It is finished!" To signify the completion of His Father's will, "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

From the manger to the cross, the incomparable glory of Christ's submission was evidenced with holy joy, obedient delight, and determined desire to do the will of His God and Father.

Job's Submission

Personal loss and bereavement enter into the experience of all mankind. Job, the patriarch, lost his great wealth in one sweep of disaster; added to this was the bereavement of his ten children: a much greater loss. Yet, his priceless submission during the tragedy was evidenced by his conduct and words, "Job arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:20-22). To eulogize the Lord during such a circumstance is not easy, but it reveals the glory of submitting to the will of God! Verily, it has its reward; the end of the Book of Job reveals the double blessings which God gave him.

David's Submission

A child of God who passes through adverse circumstances can be cut to the quick by slander, curses, and evil epithets being cast upon him unjustly and hatefully. David tasted this wicked thing along with one of the deepest sorrows of his life (2 Sam. 16:5-14). To his grief were added the slanderous words and actions of Shimei as he gloated over David. Abishai, a mighty warrior of David immediately volunteered to "take off his head" in retaliation, being quite capable of doing so. Instead, "Let him alone, and let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him." It takes a spiritual heart to discern God's dealings in persecution, and, then, to wait in submission for the day of His vindication. God remembered the slander and in due time He acted in judgment, as revealed in 1 Kings 2:36-46.

In this day of grace, however, the Christian's submission should be of an even higher order. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:19-21).

Eli's Submission

It may be profitable to insert for our admonition the opposite of glory, the tragedy of submission (1 Sam. 3:11-18). How solemn that a servant of God should be judged and punished for his tolerance of evil! God had warned Eli previously, but His words were in vain.

When the inevitable judgment was sounded through Samuel, Eli said, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." Fine sounding words in themselves, but where is the glory in submitting to the visitation of God's displeasure upon a faithless life? May this never be our experience; let us remember God's word to Eli: "Them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30).

Submission in God's Assembly

Consider Paul's words to the saints at Philippi: "Let your moderation (yieldedness or gentleness) be known to all men" (Phil. 4:5). The word "moderation" in the Greek signifies "forbearance," a willingness to waive one's rights.

The flesh insists on its rights, but this is precisely what causes strife and dissension amongst the Lord's people. How different the course indicated by Peter: "All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5). We should be known for our yielding, and our willingness to waive our rights.

The Lord Jesus who had the most rights on earth never insisted upon them; He never sought to be recognized. Read about His example in Matthew 17:24-27. He who arranged the ages, He who is the Heir of all things, manifested the spirit of submission when He said to Peter, "Lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for Me and thee."

In God's assembly, the attitude of submission to one another will prevent the disasters wrought by envy, strife, and division. Our yieldedness towards others should always be in evidence. Let us subjugate the demands of the flesh, realizing that "The Lord is near. Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7, JND).

The House of God --Part 1

The House of God

Part 1

John Bramhall

Paul's pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus possess valuable instruction for young believers, both for individual encouragement and also in guidance as to assembly responsibility. 1 Timothy reveals our great responsibilities toward the corporate testimony of God's assembly. The key verse is 1 Tim. 3:15 — "that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

The Head of the House

Paul immediately introduces us to the Head of the House: "God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1). It was at His command that Paul became His apostle and that he wrote this letter. Paul sets forth the Lordship of Christ "over the house" (Heb. 3:6), each member of the household being responsible to be submissive to His authority. The Lordship of Christ in our life and in our assembly demands our obedience. "One is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren... neither be ye called masters," said the Lord (Matt. 23:8, 10). Let us acknowledge this in word and deed, for our Risen Lord alone is the Head of the House, the Head of the Church, and the Master of each believer.

The Hope of the House

The Apostle declares that the Lord Jesus Christ is “our hope” (1:1). The Father made the risen and glorified Christ to be Head of the Church, which is His body; thus the Church on earth began; but the consummation of the Church in its earthly testimony (Acts 1:11) and taught by the apostles (1 Cor. 1:7. 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18. Titus 2:13. 1 John 3:1-4). At the coming of the Lord for His saints this hope will be fulfilled. We are exhorted to be “looking for that blessed hope”. Let us do so; our hope should not be centered on earthly things, but on the coming again of our beloved Lord. His return for which we hope is imminent; that is, He might come at any moment. Are we looking for Him Today?

The Genealogy of the House

Paul charges Timothy to stay in Ephesus to withstand the pressure of false teachers (1:3-4). The early believers were greatly troubled by so-called “gnostics”, “the knowing ones”; they claimed superior know-Godhead and the true humanity ledge, but denied the essential of Jesus. They taught many myths about a succession of emanations, upon which they sought to establish their heathen deities, with interminable genealogies of eons supposedly mediating between God and the world. In this, they never traced all things back to Christ and God, but they only produced endless controversies.

The membership of God’s household is far more clearly taught in God’s Word for us. John records its simplicity and beauty: “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God” (John 1:12). Note that we “were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh,

nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:13). This emphasizes the doctrine of the new birth, the important necessity for every man, if he would enter the kingdom of God. All other claims of relationship to God without the new birth are false (John 3:3-8. 1 Pet. 1:22-23. 1 John 5:1).

The Heart of the House

God's direct objective in Timothy's teaching of God's Word was the production of "love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (1:5). It is a wonderful blessing to be intelligently taught the Scriptures, but they are not only for our minds to take in, but also for our hearts to realize! All truth should help us to "love one another." The Lord commanded: "Love one another, as I loved you" (John 13:34); 15:12, 17. 1 John 2:10; 3:11, 18, 23; 4:11). This love is to be "sincere", with "a good conscience," not giving offence in my testimony to any: it is to be without hypocrisy, and in "faith unfeigned." One of the greatest responsibilities in the house of God, is to "love the brethren." May we faithfully obey the Lord!

The Rule of the House

Paul next presents the rule of the house (1:6-16). He reveals what happens when the heart of the house is missing, for some in his day "swerved" and "turned aside unto vain jangling," which means "empty talk." Failing to show love to their brethren, they became teachers of the law, seeking to place the household under the rule of law instead of grace. The principle of rule for the house of God is Grace! "Ye are not under

law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). What is the difference?

Under law, God said in effect, “If you will do good, I will bless you” (Deut. 28:1-14), and “If you will do evil, I will curse you” (Deut. 28:15-68). This still has its divine place in the world, as Paul reveals to Timothy, and is “for the lawless and disobedient” (1:8-10), who are not in the house of God. The law never helped a person to do the right, but rather condemned his failure.

The principle of grace in the house of God is a higher standard than that which the law required. The law said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” but Christ says to us, “Love one another as I have loved you!” The law sets forth God’s earthly ideal of the way men should live, but grace sets forth the standard of heaven! Our divine ideal is to be like Christ, doing the will of God and overcoming every form of evil (Rom. 12:1-2). Grace also helps us to fulfil this responsibility in a way that the law could never do.

When we allow grace to rule, we shall follow the pattern Paul sets for us himself, never forgetting that it was the “grace of our Lord... exceeding abundant” that brought us into the House. Paul did not forget what he once had been (1:13-15), and how that he as “chief of sinners” had been saved. We should also remember that in relationship to each other in the House, we are under the rule of grace, —a heavenly pattern indeed. Note this high standard of Christian living in 2 Cor. 10:5; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 4:1, 30; 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:19; 1 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 1:7. Let us behave accordingly!

The Glory of the House

Who is the greatest, most honoured person in the house? God tells us who is the greatest ONE in the House, and who is the Glory of the House. "Now unto the King eternal (king of the ages), incorruptible, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever" (1:17). Never think that the material building, however comfortable, or any of our fellow-believers, however esteemed, bear the true glory of this testimony. God places it upon the Lord Jesus Christ alone. He is the Glory of the House! Whatever the age, He is still King. He is also the only incorruptible One. He is very God, too! Best of all, God uses the word "invisible". When we gather together as His people, do we realize that HE is in our midst? This is a real test! The greatest and loveliest of persons in any gathering of saints is the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps you meet in a humble hall or a very fine, substantial building; but whatever it is, or however few or many saints may be there, never forget that there is ONE Who is worth more than ten thousand ... He is altogether lovely." Praise His Name!

The House of God --Part 2

The House of God

Part 2

John Bramhall

While this article is complete in itself, it would be profitable to read it in conjunction with the article In this section appearing in the last number. — Ed.

Since earthly households some times are destroyed by Satan and sin, we ought to realize that from these same evil influences there is a danger to the House of God. Our enemy is powerful and well armed (Eph. 6:12, 2 Cor. 10:4-5). We, therefore, have a warfare to wage for the protection of the character of the assembly. Paul emphasized three phases of our responsibility in this regard (Tim. 1:18, 2:7).

First, the inward aspect of the warfare (1:18-20). This presents a challenge to our spiritual character and to our faithfulness to God's Word. We are to hold, to maintain, faith with a "good conscience." Faith embraces the two ideas, the doctrine of God, and the state of the soul. One should never cast off "sound doctrine," but hold it with the inward energy of faith. Do not give up God's truth as He teaches it, but hold it energetically in "a good conscience," obeying it in your life. This is part of waging a "good warfare."

Second, the upward or God-ward aspect of the warfare (2:1-4). This emphasizes the responsibility of "supplications, prayers, and intercessions." We have a God Who is the Saviour-God, anxious that men be saved;

therefore, for the development of our testimony during its continuance on earth, the extent of the prayer-life of the assembly is imperative. This ministry at the Throne of Grace is our constant recourse, for it even touches the “powers that be” in order that we may carry out our great testimony for Christ in this present age. The prayer-life of the assembly and of every believer is necessary for “a good warfare.”

Third, the outward aspect of the warfare (2:5-7) which places the emphasis; first, on our being ambassadors to the world; second, on our proclaiming the good news of the Saviour; and, third, on His power and willingness to save men, “For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus; Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Through being faithful to the Word of God, persevering in prayer, and engaging in active gospel testimony, we shall “war a good warfare,” protecting the House from Satan’s destructive influences. May God help each of us to fulfil this responsibility.

The Order of the House

“God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor. 14:33), but the God of order in the assembly of the saints. We find that there is a divine order in every local gathering of the House (1 Tim. 2:2-15). “Let all things be done decently and in order” is His command (1 Cor. 14:40). One phase of this order has to do with the responsibility of the men, and the other with that of the women. The brethren are responsible to lead the assembly piously, affectionately, and intelligently in audible praise and prayer (1 Tim. 2:8). Every brother should always be exercised as to his spiritual state of acceptance before

God, and as to whether the Spirit of God would use him in thus leading the saints to the Throne of God. It is necessary, therefore, that the heart and the life be kept clean so that prayer may be effective and result in the needed blessing from God.

Our sisters are advised to be in submission in the public gatherings of God's people. They are not to participate in leadership (1 Tim. 2:8-15); nevertheless, they may make a blessed contribution to the testimony, not that of the outward adornment which in itself should always be governed by modesty and discretion, but that of the spiritual adornment of "good works." They are not to assume a place in the leadership of the House; first, because of God's order in creation (1 Cor. 11:1-16); and, second, because of the women's guilt in the Fall. Let brother and sister each obey with gladness the Word of God, and thus maintain the beautiful order of the House.

The Care of the House

Each local expression of God's House should have the best of care; the requirements for this are given in 1 Tim. 3:1-13. The "overseers" have the spiritual care of the House, and the "deacons," the material care of the House.

How important this spiritual care by the shepherds is! It is to be done by men who have the heart-exercise and the spiritual qualification necessary for the work (1 Tim. 3:1-7). The Holy Spirit develops such men, and assigns to them their task (Acts 20:28). These shepherds and deacons should be recognized by all the others in the assembly (1 Thess. 5:12-13). A heart for Christ and His people is absolutely imperative (John 21:15-17). No man can do work of this type without showing this character

and without first performing such works as will prove his spiritual qualifications to the church.

The deacons, or ministers, are definitely required to be spiritual men, and in their lives to be faithful to God's Word. They must manifest their fidelity and ability before they can be entrusted with the responsibility of material things for the saints. It would appear that in this work, promotion is possible; in Acts chapters 6 and 8, Stephen and Philip were particularly honoured of God, although they had begun by humbly serving Him through waiting on tables. Every young brother should be prayerfully exercised before the Head of the House, our Lord Jesus Christ, as to this great task of caring for the members of the Divine family in order that it may please the Spirit of God to so develop his character, ability, and testimony that some day he may fulfil this responsibility toward the House of God.

The Dignity of the House

How great is the truth covered in 1 Tim. 3:14-16! Let us recognize the Divine side of this. First, it, as the House of God, must be suited to His character, "Holiness becometh Thy House forever." It is a testimony for Him, for His worship, and for His glory. Second, it is the local miniature of that building of Christ, His Church, that new structure of which He spoke in Matthew 16, when not one stone was yet laid. "I will build," He declared, on the foundation of Peter's confession of Him as the Son of God. Third, it is the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost (Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16). The occupancy of the Holy Spirit gives it character. As long as He occupies it, it is the House of God; when He is gone, only religious Babylon will remain.

The purpose of God in the testimony of the Church is that a clear witness be borne to Christ, His person and His work, and in order that this testimony be given with intelligence and power, the witness of Christ is given to us in detail, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (V. 16).

God grant that He may be thus revealed by our assemblies in the many different localities where we reside.

The House of God --Part 3

The House of God

Part 3

John Bramball

This is the third article in a series that our brother has given us on the First Epistle to Timothy; it should therefore be read in conjunction with his earlier papers.
— Ed.

The Holy Spirit in the House

It is our responsibility to permit the Spirit of God to assert and maintain His rights in the assembly of the saints. There never has been a period of divine history in which the Holy Spirit has not shared a part. In 1 Tim. 4:1-5 we see His authority in the House of God. Our age, more than any other, is the age of the Holy Spirit; from Pentecost to the rapture of the Church to glory, He is the Vicar of Christ on earth. The outstanding truth of the Book of the Acts is that during the early years of Church history, He was present to do His work. The Epistles constantly unfold the wonders of His Person and work in both corporate and individual testimony on earth. It is essential to the welfare of the House that the members acknowledge His Person in obedience to His sovereign authority on earth. A study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit from God's Word is a great help to every young Christian.

Conduct in the House

In this Epistle the Lord had some personal advice for Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6-16) relative to his attitude and behaviour in the House of God. These words to Timothy should encourage every young believer to be an example among the saints, in character and conduct. A personal example of excellence before all fellow-believers should be the aim of everyone in the assembly, "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." In so doing, each will find that the exhortation that follows will be fulfilled in his testimony (5:1-2). These words instruct young believers how to conduct themselves in relation to all others in the assembly, how to consider the aged brethren as fathers, the aged sisters as mothers, the young men as brothers, and the young women as sisters, with all purity. Young Christian, look upon all in the assembly in this manner and you will be greatly honoured by the Lord.

Widows in the House

Paul in like manner deals with the problem of the support of widows in the Church. He sets forth the qualifications of those widows who are fully worthy of congregational support (1 Tim. 5:3-16). It should be realized that the relatives of any widow must assume this responsibility in order that the assembly be not charged (5:48 and 16). If this cannot be done, certain requirements are made plain, a limit to the age is stated and a standard of character and testimony is set for all widows who are to be supported. Young widows are to be refused and encouraged rather to marry, to establish a home, and to guide their children. In this way God

graciously entrusts worthy widows and their material needs to the care of His Household.

Discipline in the House

Paul, in 1 Tim. 5:17-25, reveals the necessity of discipline in the assembly. This responsibility of the elders has frequently been neglected, notwithstanding, every child of God should realize that he is subject to discipline. The flesh is still present in every child of God (Gal. 5:3-25. 1 Cor. 5:12- 13). The believer also is in the world that is away from God, where, if not protected, he can be defiled. Satan is always ready to use the world and the flesh to lead the child of God astray. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, Peter, and many others, all prove that none are exempt from failure.

Paul exhorts us to honour worthy overseers “who labour in the Word and doctrine.” Thank God for such! All must respect and honour them, being careful not to receive any accusation against them unless with definite proof before “two or three witnesses.” Flagrant sin in the assembly is to be rebuked (5:20). Sin manifested and permitted among the people of God is a great tragedy, for if not corrected it may result in divine judgment.

This is a subject for careful study. Godliness among the believers must be exemplified; worldliness must be shunned. If a church of God is going on happily in the things of Christ, engaging in the work of the Lord, and ministering the one to the other in love, sin will not likely lift its ugly head. Young believer, seek to be “an example of the believers,” proving that you know how to behave yourself in the House of God.

Perils in the House

The advice of the Apostle here teaches us that we must understand and fulfil our responsibility at our daily work (6:1-2). Do not forget that when at work or any place else you represent God's assembly (6:3-5). The proper attitude of heart to the material things of life is also mentioned (6:6-8).

How easily we fail in this! Learn then the lesson that, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." If you do, the dangers of riches will not ensnare you (6:9-10). Many Christians have put the desire to be rich before the desire to please God, and this has resulted in their sorrow and eternal loss. Young believer, set your heart on eternal things, "The things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). If God is pleased to prosper you materially, learn how to honour Him with your substance (1 Tim. 6:17-19). We all should learn the joy of giving to the Lord whether we are prosperous or otherwise, for it is a blessing that will ultimately mean an eternal reward in heaven.

Admonitions in the House

The balance of the Epistle is filled with personal admonitions to Timothy which every young believer in the House of God can well lay to his heart. "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life" (6:11-12). What a blessed occupation to be in!

"Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;

Life with its way before us lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize."

Thus Paul's exhortation to Timothy is written for our encouragement and intelligent obedience; we might well take it to ourselves, "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the House of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."

May the Holy Spirit help us all to wisely and faithfully fulfil these tremendous but blessed responsibilities in our own assembly of saints in order that our blessed Lord Jesus Christ be glorified.

* * *

"Put ye on the Lord Christ." It is immensely important to have the truth of the Lordship of Christ deeply engraved on the heart. It is the only regulator of the course and conduct. It settles a thousand questions. If the heart be really subject to the authority of Christ, it is in readiness for anything and everything to which He calls us, be it to stand still or go forward, to do little or much, to be active or passive.—C. H. M.

The Joy of Being With Christ - John Bramhall

Have you ever considered that in a very few words, the Scriptures describe the blessedness of those who have gone to be with Christ? Yet these few words are complete in their revelation to convey to our hearts the eternal blessedness of it!

WHERE ARE THEY?

is a question these Scriptures answer, in regard to any loved ones who have gone before. Two words sufficiently cover this, found in Philippians 1:23 "With Christ." Do you remember Peter writing (in his second Epistle, chapter 1 18) of being "with Him on the holy mount?" On that occasion he expressed the great joy of that privilege saying, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." He was right, for the glory of Christ's presence is unequalled. Then David the Psalmist declares: "In Thy presence is fullness of joy" (Ps. 16:11). Does not Colossians 3:4 tell us that the blessedness of departed saints forevermore is to be "with HIM in glory?" How sweetly must the words of Jesus have fallen on the dying thief's ear when He answered: "Today shalt thou be WITH ME in paradise." What blessedness: WITH CHRIST!

WHAT IS IT LIKE?

would be another good question to raise. Another two words fully describe it in the same Philippian chapter and verse, saying: "far better." There is suggestion that the glory of being with Christ has no comparison on earth, In contrast to all earthly things below, the

privilege of being in His glorious presence is supremely higher than any earthly honor The Revised Version of the Scriptures renders the words as meaning: "very far better." J. N. Darby's translation says: "very much better." Moffatt's rendering is: "far the best." The saints gone before are really enjoying a grand time in His presence: not one longs to be back here on earth. Their present circumstances they answer are "far better" It almost makes one's heart long to be with them, does it not?

HOW DO THEY FEEL?

is not amiss to ask. I believe they would answer in the words of 2 Corinthians 5:8—"We are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The Revised Version renders the word "present" as meaning "At Home." Oh, they answer, "We are at Home!" Young's Translation suggests: To be among one's own people, to be "at home." So another two words would tell of their blessedness "at home." Not one is a stranger to the other, although they have never met before. What a company of happy people in His presence, all saying, "at home." No hunger nor thirst in that home: no scorching trials of earth; no tears of grief and pain: They are "at home," the place of "living fountains of waters." Read Revelation 7:16, 17 ARE THEY EMPLOYED?

should be next considered. 'What is the answer? Two words again cover it: "serving Christ." Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple" (Rev. 7:15). "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." Yes, service and worship is their constant occupation. Better service than ever done on earth: fuller adoration of His blessed

Person and Work than ever known below. How glorious to he thus employed in eternity! Will it not be grand when we also enter upon our heavenly employment in His eternal Presence!

Eight words, but oh how full of meaning:

"with Christ" "far better" "at home" "serving

Christ"-but let us remember that we who are still here should find encouragement to go on faithfully for Him from the words of Hebrews 10:37, which say: "For yet a very little while He that comes will come, and will not delay" (J. N. D.). Then will be the re-union morning, in the land where partings shall never be known, for we shall all be "with Christ" forever. "So shall we ever be with the Lord."

If my reader has no assurance of being re-united to those who are now with Christ, permit me to explain God's way of salvation to you:

1. You MUST acknowledge before God the truth of His Word declaring you to be a lost, guilty sinner in His sight. This is a universal fact, "for ALL have sinned and come short of the glory of God - Rom. 3:23. See Isa 53:6.
2. You MUST acknowledge that the Lord Jesus Christ, God's be- loved Son, is the only Saviour for you, having died on the Cross to shed His precious blood for your sins. "In Christ, we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" - Eph. 1:7. See Isa. 53:5, John 1:29 and John 3:16.
3. You MUST accept by faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, as your personal Lord and Saviour. for "as many as received HIM, to them gave he power to become the

sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name" - John 1:12. See Romans 10:9.

Will you do this NOW? Then you will be assured by God's Word that you will enter with those gone before, into "The Joy of Being With Christ".

John W. Bramhall

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The Knowledge of God

The Knowledge of God

John W. Bramhall

Mr. John W. Bramhall of Charlotte, N.C., favours us with another devotional article, showing us the transforming power and manifold value of a personal knowledge of God and His character.

Personal knowledge of God will change character, performing transformations which follow the new birth. It is gradual, not sudden in its change, as the Spirit of God introduces new motives and objects into the life for God's glory— (2 Corinthians 3:18). 'Christianity in its revelation of a personal God and Saviour, of a future life, and of moral responsibility, and its view that the glory of God rather than the mere pleasure of man is the highest object of life, is the most powerful force in the formation of character' (A.T. Schofield, M.D., from Springs of Character).

Therefore, we turn from modern philosophy and ethics, preferring the "depths of God" to man's shallow pride, for we must dwell deep - (Jeremiah 49:8).

'Dwell deep my soul! - forbid thou shouldest stay shallow! Dwell deep in thought, in purpose, wish and will!

Dwell deep in God - let His own presence hallow;
Thy inner being let His presence fill.'

The Mind is Changed by a Personal Knowledge of God

It has been said, 'The mind casts a shadow just like the body.' As we pass through this world, unknown to ourselves, our mind, personality, without effort or desire, is casting shadows for good or evil on whom we meet. To know God is to be a blessing, for then we can be the unconscious channel through which God passes into the hearts of others as unconsciously we radiate His glories as we live in personal enjoyment of God.

The sphere of the mind has been called 'the hidden home of character.' Therefore, we hear the Spirit plead for 'the renewing of your mind' in Romans 12:2. It implies 'a renewal, renovation, complete change for the better' (Thayer's Lexicon). 'Being renewed in the spirit of your mind; and having put on the new man' etc. (Ephesians 4:23, 24). To be so changed, that the spirit which governs the mind is renewed. What a change! Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 which reveals the wisdom and knowledge of God to one who is "spiritual," noting the last phrase - 'But we have the mind of Christ.' 'We are said, having the Holy Spirit, to have also the mind of Christ, the intelligent faculty with its thoughts' (footnote of J.N.D. Trans. Read Romans 11:33-36). Let us then fulfill Romans 12:1,2.

The Desires are Changed by a Personal Knowledge of God

'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind' writes Paul. The renewing of the mind will produce, without effort on our part, unconsciously, a change of desires. The word "transformed" indicates 'a change of moral character for the better, a process of

changing' (Thayer's Lexicon). How greatly to be desired! How the habits of life can be changed for us by the Spirit, which we earnestly would have altered!

It is harmful for us to attempt changing habits without changing desires; no progress is made and nothing is gained! On every hand Christians ask - "Is this right? Is this wrong?" It is unspiritual to do so, for to give up anything without changing desires is but to be a hypocrite. The change of desires is made by the transforming work of the Spirit and involves no giving up. Draw near to God; learn to know HIM; the result is that the desires are changed. There is no loss; nothing but gain! (read Psalm 73:25, 26; Psalm 37:4). The old desires (Ephesians 2:3) disappear! The new desires conform to the Will of God.

The Manners are Changed by a Personal Knowledge of God

It is an evidence of God's power when our manners are changed, for they will be compatible to God's character and reveal us to be a friend of God! Abraham 'was called the friend of God' (see 2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23). What behaviour and deportment must have been reflected in Abraham through this intimate friendship with God!

Enoch walked with God three hundred years! (Genesis 3:21-24; Hebrews 11:5). Had no Bible as we do; no Christianity as we know it; no revealed Father as we have. Yet what a life! God became his nearest and dearest Friend as he walked with HIM all those years! What must have been the character of his deportment? What were the results of such a walk?

1. An unassuming and humble dignity in his earthly life.
2. Truth and sincerity in perfect wisdom must have been reflected in perfect love.
3. An inward peace and calm always seen in his manners, though surrounded by ante-deluvian sin and wickedness; and knowing of the coming judgment of God by the flood. How we should seek to possess this unconscious stamp of God in our manners in these perilous times! (see Isaiah 26:3).

The Pursuits of Life are Changed by a Personal Knowledge of God

This follows the change of desires, for the pursuits of life will be definitely affected by our increasing knowledge of God. The inward change of desires must precede the outward change in pursuits. If not, the outward change will be artificial and also contrary to the principles of Christianity. Christianity is the life of Christ working from within and outward in its direction (Galatians 2:20). It is the life of Christ communicated to the believer, dwelling in the believer and to flow through the believer.

When God works within (Philippians 2:12,13), there will be the necessary change of pursuits, for He Himself will fill the vision. We can be just as keen in our pursuits but after different objects than formerly. Instead of man, God will be in the foreground of life. Man will shrink to his proper perspective and the pursuit of God will change the pursuits of life! Let the wilderness Psalm of David be the earnest cry of our hearts (Psalm 63, noting particularly verses 1, 5, 8).

The Heart is Content by a Personal Knowledge of God

The world seeks for contentment but apart from God! It drinks from sources that can only fail (see Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13; John 4:13). How different are the words of Paul — ‘I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself’ (Philippians 4:11 -- J.N.D. Trans.).

Christ is his source of satisfaction. Contentment, satisfaction, harmony, holiness and wholeness of spirit are in Him (see John 4:14; 1 Timothy 6:6). The sight of God changes all, even one’s self; and how needful is this! ‘Now mine eye seeth Thee’ said Job, ‘wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes’ (Job 42:6). ‘My heart is fixed’ (Ps. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7).

The Man is Conquered by a Personal Knowledge of God

There always seems to be a war in our members (Romans 7 and Galatians 5:17), but if we lived in the reality of God’s presence there would not be that constant conflict. The reason our evil natures and fleshly desires make such a strong fight within, is simply because we do not know God as we ought.

When God is the Victor, there is no battle; there is no strife. The power and value of heart knowledge of God will show that His love conquers; love that is not constrained, nor forced, but spontaneous love. There can be no fight where God is known!

The Thoughts are Changed by a Personal Knowledge of God

The personal knowledge of God will affect each thought I think and each word I speak. He is to be the central truth of my life, the pivot around which my existence revolves. When I know Him as I should, He is all-wise; He is all-love; He is my Father and I am His Child! I will not seek to explain, defend or still less, question His dealings with me! My thoughts of God in my inmost soul will be with deepest reverence and love! My thoughts will be guarded by Him! How greatly we need this!

‘The Lord is near; be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God: and the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 4:5-7 —J.N.D. Trans.). Beloved, let us permit God Himself to form our character and personality!

The Last Days of Christianity

The Last Days of Christianity

John Bramhall

The Second Epistle to Timothy was written at the close of Paul's life; it was the last inspired communication from his pen. Even then, the truth was becoming unpopular; nominal Christians were ashamed to identify themselves with the Apostle and the testimony of the Lord. God permitted these circumstances to provide through Paul's inspired pen, His guidance for the individual saint in days of spiritual declension. The assembly of the living God is prophetically contemplated as "a great house" in the "last days" with its mixture of good and bad vessels.

The gradual declension of the Church can be traced through this Epistle by noticing three special verses. First, men are seen straying from the truth (2:18). Second, they are found in a greater degree of departure resisting the truth (3:8). Third, they are uncovered deliberately and wilfully rejecting the truth for they "turn away their ears from the truth" (4:4). While they still profess to represent Christianity, they have only a form of godliness but deny the power thereof (3:5).

Such conditions are "perilous," and every instructed young believer will seek to realize the truth of Paul's prophecy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (3: 1). All the moral conditions of the "last days" recorded by Paul, are now abundantly manifested in Christendom (3:2-4). In view of these

facts, his last letter to Timothy is especially timely and instructive for young believers today.

Be Brave!

Chapter one presents God's challenge in the "last days." With all the moral and spiritual dangers surrounding him, Timothy was encouraged to be brave. Perhaps Timothy was timid, possibly he wept as he thought of Paul in prison forsaken by the saints and soon to be executed. His was not an easy position, nor is ours easy today. It is easier to drift down the stream of declension than to swim bravely against the current.

Young believer, BE BRAVE! Listen: "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. For God hath not given us the spirit of fear (or cowardice); but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (1:6-8).

Timothy was enjoined to kindle into flame his gift; to throw off the spirit of cowardice, and to bear courageously "the afflictions of the gospel." Young believer, do NOT be ashamed of your Lord's testimony, and although others around show "the spirit of fear," be true to His Word for His glory. BE BRAVE!

Be Strong!

Chapter two illuminates the responsibility of a young believer in regard to his spiritual difficulties. It opens with the stirring exhortation to "BE STRONG in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2:1). It further reveals the kind of strength to be shown. Be like a strong soldier

disciplined to the Master's will (2:3-4). Be like a striving athlete straining every nerve and muscle to win the victory (2:5). Be like the patient steady labourer of the soil working diligently with the ultimate reward in view (2:6), and follow in the path of obedience, keeping your eye constantly upon the risen Christ (2:7-9).

Be strong in time of suffering, for it has its reward (2:10-14). Be strong, and intensely so, in your study of God's Word (2:15). Be strong in your path of separation from all known doctrinal and moral evil (2:16-26). It is a strong young believer who will "shun," "depart," "purge himself," "flee," "avoid," and "turn away" from all the doctrinal and moral dangers around us today. May God the Spirit help each young believer to BE STRONG.

Be Consistent!

Chapter three opens with the moral and spiritual apostasy described in minute detail (1- 5). The alarming fact is that this state of things accompanies the profession of Christianity; that is, Christendom "having a form of godliness" (3:5). There is also an abundance of false teachers (3:6-9. cf. 2 Pet. 2).

Paul sets before Timothy his own consistent testimony, a contrast to the corruption and false teaching of his day (3:10-12). This was for Timothy's example, with a warning that conditions would become worse (3:13). Do we really believe this? Are we actually concerned about our path in the midst of these dangers? What is God's counsel and encouragement? The answer is: be consistent.

"Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned" (3:14-17). Keep on! Follow the Word of truth,

for it is your salvation, your provision to furnish all the strength needed to be God's man in this scene of spiritual and moral declension. Obey faithfully the principles and the teachings of the New Testament. BE CONSISTENT.

Be Faithful!

Chapter four tells that there is a judgment day ahead when, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). We shall be exposed then by our Judge, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 4:1), and in view of "that day" we should seek to be faithful now. "Preach the Word" (4:2); hold not back any of its truth. The Bible is our text book for salvation and for edification. We should faithfully support the truth although we be surrounded by unsound teachings and unwilling ears (4:2-4).

Diligence in all things, endurance of all circumstances, and faithfulness in the fulfilling of our ministry (4:5) will prove our devotion to God in the "last days." Will there be compensation? Shall we be satisfied in such a path? Yes, eternally so! Paul was! Hear him: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (4:7-8).

From this last inspired letter of Paul comes a stirring message for all young believers today, in the last days of Christianity, BE BRAVE! BE STRONG! BE CONSISTENT! BE FAITHFUL! Let us all accept the challenge, and by God's grace fulfil it for His glory and for our eternal reward.

The Melted Saint

The Melted Saint

John Bramhall

“Their soul is melted because of trouble” — Psalm 107:26.

Oliver Cromwell lived in early English history and was called the Defender of the Commonwealth. One day when in great need of supplies for his armies, he dispatched soldiers to search a nearby cathedral for gold and other valuables. On their return the General was told that the search was in vain. “What! you found nothing?” he cried. “Nothing, Sir, only the silver statues of the saints,” said they. “Then take the saints down, melt them and put them in circulation!” roared their Commander.

How often God does this with His children! The crucible of “trouble” is the melting pot for them.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WAS MELTED — The 22nd. Psalm has rightly been called the Psalm of the Cross. It depicts the suffering Messiah on the Cross, suffering at the hands of God, Satan and man! Jeremiah prophesied the Saviour’s words from the Cross, saying, “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow”, etc. (Lam. 1:12). No one has suffered like the Son of God on that tree! Hear His own words from Psalm 22:14, saying, “My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of My bowels.” Through that melted ONE, the greatest flow of love and grace has come to a sin-sick and weary world, bringing eternal blessings to all who believe on HIM!

THE NATION OF ISRAEL IS MELTED — God, through the weeping prophet has said, “Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how else could I do for the daughter of My people?” (Jer. 9:7—JND Trans.). Among the nations into the melting pot of trouble has God cast His disobedient people. What grief has been, still is, and shall yet be, theirs! The horrible furnace of The Great Tribulation is ahead for them! “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7).

THE EARTH IS TO BE MELTED— “The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.” (Psa. 46:6 JND Trans.). Into the melting pot of God’s wrath and the wrath of the Lamb, will the nations be cast at the end of the age. Then He will speak, saying, “Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psa. 46:10). What a day of blessing will the saved nations enjoy during the Millenium also, but only after passing through “the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10 — JND Trans.).

THE SAINTS ARE TO BE MELTED — Beloved, so proud and cold are we today, that we often appear to others as lifeless statues. God must bring us down and put us in the crucible of testing. Without trouble God cannot melt us: with trouble He is able to soften us, removing the harshness and coldness so often ours. Are you a melted saint? David was: “My soul melteth for sadness; strengthen me according to Thy Word” (Psa. 119:28 JND Trans.). It is the melted saint who finds the strength of God’s Word as his needed portion. It is the melted saint who calls upon the Lord.

The Patience of Christ

The Patience of Christ

John Bramhall

John W. Bramhall lives at Charlotte, North Carolina. He has served the Lord for many years in the United States of America, Canada, and the West Indies. We are grateful for another devotional article from his pen, an article in which he presents to our hearts Christ the supreme example.

“The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5 —R.V.).

The expression, “the patience of Christ,” could possibly be interpreted in three ways: (a) The patient waiting for Christ. (b) That we may be patient in all our sufferings as Christ was in His (Heb. 12:2). (c) That since Christ is expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet (Heb. 10:13), so should we be patient in our hopes of His triumph and our complete deliverance.

The text could possibly be rendered, “The Lord teach and enable you to love as God loves, and to be patient as Christ is patient.” The Greek word for patient is *hupomone*, literally, “an abiding under,” signifying the need of abiding patience under all circumstances of life. A few thoughts concerning our Lord’s patience will encourage us; so let us ask, what is He waiting for?

He is waiting for the day of reunion. It is approximately 1,900 years since His promise of John 14:3. Has He forgotten it? Could He? Never! The consummation of this event, blessedly described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17,

Ephesians 5:27, John 17:24 and Revelation 19:7, is constantly the patient, steadfast expectation of Christ. Surely we can be patient as He, for this glorious, yet soon coming event. Perhaps today.

He is waiting for the day of His rewards. The day of His rewards is described by various expressions: —“The day of Christ,” Philippians 2:16 — “The day of Jesus Christ” Philippians 1:6 — “The day of the Lord Jesus,” 1 Corinthians 5:5 — “The Day,” 1 Corinthians 3:13 — “That Day,” 2 Timothy 1:12, 18 and 4:8. Regardless of the various applications, we know He is waiting for the day when He will reward His servants! The rewards? Just a glimpse of 1 Corinthians 9:25, 2 Timothy 4:8, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:4 and Revelation 2:10, is sufficient proof for our hearts to be encouraged to plod on in patient, steadfast service until He comes.

He is waiting for the day of His Power: Read Psalm 110:1 and realize that while the enemies of our Lord are at present ruling in power over the earth, yet He is patiently waiting until the Father consummates this promise. The complete destruction of all His enemies is recorded in 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10, 11 Thessalonians 2:5-9, Psalm 2:4-9, Revelation 6:17.

He is waiting for the day of His millennial glory: A three-fold distinction of this glory is indicated: (a) with the Church in Revelation 21 — (b) with Israel in Ezekiel 37:1-14, Zechariah 12:10 and 13:2, Romans 11:26 — (c) with the Nations in Zechariah 9:10, 14:9 and Isaiah chapter 2. Many Old Testament prophecies abundantly tell of that coming glory which will be on and over the earth during His millennial reign. How patient He is!

He is waiting for the day of the new creation: God's eternal purpose is recorded in Ephesians 1:10 —"that ... He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." See also Colossians 1:20 and Revelation 21: 1-5. Blessed New Creation, when sin shall be no more, etc. and this is part of the great work of His patience! His steadfast longing and waiting for the fulfillment of the purposes of God, put our hearts to shame as we consider our need of "the patience of Christ."

"O patient, spotless One,
Our hearts in meekness train;
To bear Thy yoke, and learn of Thee,
That we may rest obtain."

The Patience Of Christ

The Patience Of Christ

John Bramhall

The longing hearts of many believers for the return of our blessed Lord can be expressed in the words of Judges 5:28, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariot"? The multiplicity of violence and corruption upon the earth today, coupled with increased testings of various kinds, may also tend to produce the spirit of impatience for our final deliverance, to the spiritual heart. "Lord, When are you coming? Why do you not come today?" may often be expressed. This is where our need of patience appears. We need the prayerful exhortation of Paul — "The Lord Direct Your Hearts into the Love of God, and Into the Patience of the Christ" — (2 Thess. 3:5 JND).

Note how the Scriptures link our blessed hope with "patience" in Romans 8:23-25; in James 5:7, 8 and Revelation 1:9; and above all is the Lord's example in Hebrews 12:1-3. If we are impatient we should consider how long the Lord Jesus has been waiting in the presence of the Father above, waiting for all the longings of His heart to be fulfilled; and waiting with patience! What are the longings of His heart; that for which He has been waiting and for which He desires that we should share His patience as we also wait? What is He waiting for? He is waiting for:

The Day of Re-Union With His Own: He remembers His promise, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am ye may be also" (John 14:3). He longs to

have us with Him in His glory (John 17:24). He longs to meet us at the designated meeting place “in the air” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17). He longs to “present us to Himself a glorious church,” etc. (Eph. 5:27). He longs to look upon His beloved Bride in her glory, when she will be the perfect object of His eternal love (Revelation 19:6-9). He is patiently waiting for His “pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:45, 46). Could we not say that He has More to wait for than we have? If so, do we not need His Patience while we wait for Him to come?

The Day of His Rewards: “Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12). It will be His Day! when in the greatness of His loving heart He can bestow upon His own their eternal rewards. It will be the great prize day! It is called “the day of Christ” (Philippines 1:6; 2:16). “The day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5). “The Day!” (1 Corinthians 3:13). “That Day!” (2 Timothy 1:12; 1:18) and 2 Timothy 4:7, 8). It will be The Day when He will compensate all of His servants for their faithfulness, their sufferings, their patience and their labor for Him, etc. (2 Timothy 2:12). If we are longing and waiting for “That Day” — His heart is longing and patiently waiting to express His eternal appreciation of us!

“Oh, how will recompense His Smile, the sufferings of this little while!”

The Day of His Power: “Thy people shall be willing in The Day of Thy Power.” Read Psalm 110. It will be the day when He shall be personally, visibly and gloriously manifested to the whole world! (Matthew 25:31; 26:64; Revelation 1:7). He will be “King over all the

earth" (Zech. 14:9). He will be "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Revelation 19:16). It will be the demonstration of His power! How? By the destruction of His enemies.

How long-suffering and patient He has been with His enemies, both celestial and human, but in "the day of His power," "His enemies shall lick the dust" (Psalm 72:9). What day of divine retribution that will be! (See 2 Thessalonians 1:3-10 also 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9; Revelation 6:17; and Psalm 2:4-9). How fortunate that His patience is greater than ours! When we become impatient with the wicked may we have our hearts directed "into the patience of Christ".

The Day of His Glory: It is a long time since the resurrected Lord spoke on the Emmaus road of doubt, despair, disillusionment and discouragement to His two disciples —"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26). He has not yet entered into all His glory, but still continues to wait for it. Likewise, we should too (1 Peter 1:6-8; 2:20, 21). What is the glory that He is waiting for? What are the glories in which He will share for all of His sufferings and humiliation? His sufferings are over, praise God! But the glory is still to follow (1 Peter 1:11).

He is waiting for — (a) His Glory with His Church: (Revelation 21:9 to 22:5). Not alone through millennial years will this be manifested over the earth, but through endless ages she will be" prepared as a Bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). Her bridal beauty will be unchanged for Him and before the whole universe, for ever! "That in the age to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us

through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). For "We are His workmanship," "His Masterpiece," (Ephesians 2:10) — Hallelujah!

(b) His glory with Israel: Waiting for the national resurrection! (Ezekial 37:1-14). Their national repentance and birth are yet to come (Isaiah 66:8; Zachariah 12:10; 13:2). Their national deliverance (Romans 11:26), and their national glory (Read Isaiah chapters 60 and 61). The glory of the Lord will cover the earth when Israel will be his lampstand of divine testimony to all the world (Read Zech. chapter 4).

His Glory with the Nations: "He shall speak peace to the nations!" (Zech. 9:10). The living of the nations who shall be His when He comes will share the glory of His earthly kingdom (Matthew 25: 34). The nations will enter into "the Lord's house" in that day. "All nations shall flow unto it." Nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Read Isaiah 2:1-5). "And I will shake all nations, and The Desire of All Nations Shall Come" etc. (Hag. 2:7). For these coming glories our blessed Lord is patiently waiting. Can we enter into His patience?

The Day of the New Creation: —Read Revelation 21:1-5. That eternal "Day of God" of which Peter wrote (2 Peter 3:12, 13) will reveal the glories of the New Creation—for ever. It will be the final reconciliation of All Things, the final consummation of His glory founded upon Christ's humiliation and death of the cross. Everything in the universe of God will then be in its proper and eternal perspective in relation to God. We read, "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile All Things unto Himself ... whether they be

things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20). All of His future hopes and glory, and ours too, are established with certainty because of “the blood of His cross.” For all these things He Patiently Waits! So should we!

The Perfect Loveliness of Christ

The Perfect Loveliness of Christ

John Bramhall

The Work of Christ is the perfect resting place for the conscience. The Word of Christ is the perfect guide for the path; but THE PERSON OF CHRIST is the perfect object for the heart! Do we find this true in our experience today? Our great need is for an experimental and constant delight in the Person of Christ in the midst of the confusion and spiritual decline. Are we enraptured with HIM? If so, we shall say with joy and delight, "YEA, HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY!" (Song of Solomon 5:16). The perfect loveliness of Christ is fully concentrated in these words!

His Perfect Loveliness

There is nothing unlovely in HIM. There is nothing to be removed; nothing to be altered; nothing to conceal or disguise, nor to excuse. He can stand the utmost, penetrating scrutiny and analysis of character! The world hates Christ (John 7:7; 15:18) and would remove as much as it possibly could from His character (John 8:46). BUT IT CANNOT!

ALL that is lovely is found in HIM. (a) ALL that is lovely of God is found in HIM. (John 1:14; Colossians 1:15; 2:9). (b) ALL that is lovely of humanity is found in HIM—He is perfect as MAN! Never on earth has there been so manly and noble a character as Jesus Christ, in His love, compassion, kindness, gentleness, purity and

truthfulness, etc. Every human virtue was resident in Him with perfection!

“What manner of man is this?” (c) ALL that is lovely of earth is found in HIM!—In typology God reaches out to every part of His creation for figures by which He can bring home to us the glories of His Son. The human kingdom; the animal kingdom; the vegetable kingdom, etc. are used to describe the beauty of the Beloved. Note it in Song of Solomon 5:9-16 in particular. (d) ALL that is lovely in the universe is found in HIM! Even the celestial kingdoms are drawn upon by God to describe the beauty of the Beloved to us as we read God’s Word. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork...” (Psalm 19:1-6). He is “the SUN of righteousness” and “the Bright Morning Star” to His own!

Perfect and utmost loveliness is found in HIM. (a) Every part and every feature of Jesus is “ALTOGETHER LOVELY” —both in the greatness of His Godhead and the perfection of His humanity. Not just “lovely” but “ALTOGETHER LOVELY”. (b) His character and person is composed of elements that are faultless and most lovely. All the elements of His character and person combine to produce the greatest loveliness in ONE PERSON! Note some of His features: (c) He was lovely in His birth (Luke 2:42-52). Lovely in His manhood (Mark 4:41; Luke 3:22; John 7:45, 46). Lovely in His mourning (John 11:35). Lovely in His rejoicing (Luke 10:21,22). Lovely in His speech (Luke 4:22; Psalm 45:2; John 7:46). Lovely in His silence (Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 27:14; Mark 14:60, 61). Lovely as prophet, priest, king, shepherd, Saviour and servant.

His saints share HIS loveliness. (a) We are to be like HIM!—See John 15:1-12; Galatians 5:22, 23; Ephesians 4:24; Philippians 2:5; Colossians 2:10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:1-3. (b) However, the saints are not **ALTOGETHER LOVELY!** Some day we shall be “like Him, for we shall see Him as He is”—this we anticipate. Yet defects are so visible today and many saints, even the best, have failed in their most prominent characteristics. Note some examples:

1. NOAH - he did not fail before the flood, but failed after the flood.
2. ABRAHAM - called “father of the faithful,” yet he distrusted God in Egypt.
3. MOSES - called the meekest man in all the earth, but he slew an Egyptian and later was provoked by Israel.
4. JOB - a most patient man for an example, yet cursed the day of birth.
5. DAVID - the man “after God’s heart,” but committed the terrible sins of adultery and murder.
6. PETER - noted for his boldness and courage; but he sinned by cowardice and later feared the circumstances.
7. JOHN - the apostle of love and famed for it; but once desired that fire would fall from heaven upon others for their destruction.

Now WHY does God record these failures of some of His greatest saints? (c) The most outstanding sins of eminent saints have been contrary to their general character. They failed in the very qualities for which they were distinguished! But WHY does God reveal these facts? It would seem as if God reveals the unloveliness of the loveliest of men to keep us from

looking at any other person on earth or in heaven, but
TO LOOK TO HIS SON ALONE WHO IS THE CHIEFEST
OF TEN THOUSAND AND ALTOGETHER LOVELY!

“He suffers me to love Him - I so unlovely!

I have ONE so glorious to love!

He loveth me and will love me for ever!

Befriended me when I was friendless -

Will never leave nor forsake me -

He calls me His friend - and will confess

My name before His Father and His holy angels in
heaven!

ALL ever glorious is my Lord,

Must be beloved, and yet adored!

His worth, if all the nations knew

Sure the whole earth would love HIM too!

May God enable us all to enjoy THE BEAUTY OF THE
BELOVED!

The Perfection of the Lamb --Part 1

The Perfection of the Lamb

Part 1

John W. Bramhall

This is the first of two sections on the topic of “The Perfection of the Lamb”, by Mr. John Bramhall of Charlotte, North Carolina.

Out from the numerous and glorious names given to Christ in the Word of God, the special one purposely designated for prominence in the book of Revelation is the Lamb! It is repeated twenty-eight times in all, being expressed in the diminutive, meaning literally—the little lamb. Why should this name be predominant in the book of judgment and glory? Two reasons may be profitably suggested:

(a) God’s beloved Son was led “as a lamb to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7) and it is written, “His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men” (Isaiah 52:14). This to do the will of God for our redemption, descending into incomprehensible sufferings and humiliation for our sins (Isaiah 53:5-6). For this reason God declares that His holy servant “shall be exalted and lifted up and be high very much, or exceedingly” (Isaiah 52:13, lit. Heb. translation). An ancient Rabbinic Midrash says, “He shall be exalted above Abraham; He shall be lifted up above Moses, and be higher than the ministering angels.” Therefore, we should not wonder that God delights to take that name of deepest humiliation and

crown it with the highest exaltation in the end book of the Bible.

(b) The name of the “Lamb” is also the most precious of all titles to His blood-bought Church, His Bride, for two reasons. First, it is to her His sacrificial name, telling the story of an eternal redemption that He paid to purchase her for Himself (Revelation 5:8-11). Second, it is also to her His bridal name, unfolding His eternal affection that ever will be her delight (Revelation 19:6-9). Surely no other body of saints in eternity will appreciate the name of the Lamb than those who compose the Bride of the Lamb. This is indicated in the description of her heavenly glory as John saw the city of New Jerusalem as recorded in Revelation 21:9 through 22:5, for this precious name of the Lamb is mentioned seven times, indicating Him to be the centre of all and describing the perfections of the Lamb with eternal pre-eminence and to the delight of her heart.

The Perfection of His Love

“I will show thee the bride, the LAMB’S WIFE” (Revelation 21:9). She is the fruit of His affection, His redemption, His ministration and His glorification (see Ephesians 5:25-27; the “one pearl of great price” for which He “went and sold ALL that He had, and bought it” (Matthew 13:46). Possessing “the glory of God” (Revelation 21:10) she will be the satisfying object for His eternal love, perfectly suitable for His great heart! The perfection of His love will thus be realized as the heavenly saints shall be for Him and to Him a perfect and eternal Bride! He Who has loved us with infinite perfection will then have for Himself a perfect Bride forever! He then will rejoice in the fruit of His

perfect love and we shall sing through endless ages our song of perfect love: "Unto Him that loveth us and hath loosed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Revelation 1:5-6) The Perfection of His Work "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the LAMB" (Revelation 21:14). The detailed description of the glorious city of gold, with its great capacity, perfect symmetry, brilliant walls of jasper, twelve pearly gates, the street of gold and the garnished foundations studded with precious jewels, all reflect the infinite wisdom and perfect work of the Lamb as the architect and builder (Revelation 21:11-21). The devoted labours of the twelve apostles are graciously and eternally acknowledged by Him (Revelation 21:14; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:19-22), but it is the Lamb Himself who originated, inaugurated and will complete the infinite work of grace to possess His Bride (Matthew 16:16-18). The perfect workmanship of the city is likened unto "pure gold like to clear glass." An object is presented, the splendour of which far outshines the sublimest creation of human dreams.

Yet, what is a city without inhabitants? The perfection of the New Jerusalem is not complete without the presence of His sanctified and glorified saints dwelling there. They also are His workmanship (Ephesians 2:10) and necessary to complete what the angel calls "the Bride, the Lamb's wife" as she appears in her final form and character. They have been begotten by His Spirit, formed and fashioned into living stones from the darkness of sin and the quarry of a fallen world (1 Peter 2:5), and transfigured, from glory to glory (2 Corinthians

3:18) until they reach eternal perfection above. To briefly summarize the completeness of the Lamb's work, we quote the concise words of another: "He who makes, prepares and places them; makes, prepares and places their sublime habitation" (J. A. Seiss).

The Perfection of His Holiness

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the LAMB are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22). Two words are used in the Greek New Testament for "temple"; one named hieron, meaning the whole temple area with all its buildings, and the word naos implying the inner sanctuary of the holy place and the holiest of all. This latter word is used in our text, indicating to the Apostle John in the vision that there was no material sanctuary to be seen in the city. God Himself and the Lamb will be the temple thereof, the Shekinah glory encompassing the saints and all the city alike, which will enable the glorious worshippers to hold direct communion with God and the Lamb. "As consecrated high priests, they will then have come into the holiest of all, into the very cloud of God's over-shadowing glory, which is at once their covering, their temple, their God. And when the saints in immortal glory dwell within the enclosing light of the unveiled presence of God and the Lamb, as His Bride and Wife, what more need have they of temple, or outward ceremonial, to commune with Deity, or to have fellowship with the Father and the Son! Their worship is immediate and direct" (J.A. Seiss). Praise the Lord! We shall enjoy for ever the perfection of God's holiness and presence!

The Perfection of His Illumination

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the LAMB is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23). “The moon shall be ashamed and the sun confounded” writes the prophet (Isaiah 24:23), because of the out-shining glory that will be in the New Jerusalem, leaving them no more need to shine in it, since the glory of God lights it and the Lamb is the light thereof. The glory of God’s brightness will envelope, permeate and radiate through the city, causing its brilliant rays to shine over all the earth, through the reaches of outer space, making the heavenly planet seem to distant worlds a brilliant luminary whose brightness will never fail or wane! Greater still, to the hearts of the inhabitants of the city, will be the spiritual light that will illuminate the understanding of the soul with the eternal and spiritual glories of God and the Lamb through never ending ages. “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent,” stated God’s Son in John 17:3. The eternal ages for the inhabitants of that city will be spent going on, and on, learning more and more of the glories of God and His Beloved Son! What a blessed way to spend eternity!

The Perfection of His Protection

“And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the LAMB’S book of life” (Revelation 21:27). This incorruptible inheritance will never be defiled, for out of the myriads of human souls through all human history, no one can ever set foot upon its golden street who is not enrolled

in the book of life of the Lamb. He is the perfect guardian of the city and its eternal purity. Sinners may come there, yes; for sinners it was made, but only for such as are cleansed in the precious blood of the Lamb. No place is found for them that believe not in Jesus and if any love their sins better than God's salvation, the New Jerusalem is not for them. The lie of the devil, that was the primary cause of ruining the Adamic creation, will never enter there; praise His holy name!

The Perfection of the Lamb --Part 2

The Perfection of the Lamb

Part 2

John W. Bramhall

This is the second and concluding section of an article by Mr. John Bramhall, of Charlotte, North Carolina on the Lamb of God in all His glorious perfection.

The Perfection of His Economy

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the LAMB” (Revelation 22:1). A phenomenal river issues from the eternal throne with crystal clearness that never can be defiled, flowing with exhaustless blessings for the inhabitants of the city. “A heavenly river, belonging to a heavenly city, and for the use and joy of its heavenly people.” The garden of Eden had its river for creation blessing (Genesis 2:10-13). Redemption’s blessings has flowed for all as a river from the smitten Rock (Exodus 17:5-6). Spiritual blessings in a present age flow from our glorified Lord in heaven as “rivers of living water” through the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39). Millennial blessings in the kingdom will be as a mighty river issuing from the temple, ever deepening as it flows, flooding earth with God-given prosperity and peace (Ezekiel 37:1-5). So the New Jerusalem will have its bountiful supply of living waters, unceasingly rolling from the living source, the exhaustless flow of the divine life “of God and the Lamb”. With blessedness and joy we

shall drink of the river of God with its pure, crystal waters of eternal life!

There is also a phenomenal tree, “the tree of life” (Revelation 22:2), to beautify the city and supply it with perennial fruit. Shall we eat? Why not! Glorified saints may eat, although under no necessity. Jesus ate in His resurrection body (Luke 24:41-43). Angels ate of Sarah’s cakes and of Abraham’s tender calf (Genesis 18:6-8). Yet there is much more that is moral and spiritual connected with eating (see John 6:54-58; Matthew 26: 26-28; Revelation 2:7). In that realm of eternal economy we shall drink life water and eat life fruit forever. Even the nations below will receive beneficial “healing” from the “leaves of the tree”.

The Perfection of His Reign

“And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it” (Revelation 22:3). The description of the city has been chiefly external until the throne comes into view in our chapter. Now John is brought to the throne, the heart of all the city’s glory, the eternal occupants—“God and the Lamb”. It is the throne of the eternal and absolute Ruler, One Who once was slain but lives to reign with His glorified saints unto the ages of ages. The universal administration will be shared by God, the Lamb, and His glorified saints also, for “His servants shall serve Him” as eternal joint heirs by His grace (Romans 8:17-18). From the external glories we are at last brought to the most intimate and greatest revelation—to gaze at last on the face of the Lamb, possessed of inexpressible beauty and love. The centrality of all the glory is this, “they shall see His face” (Revelation 22:4), transfiguring us eternally into His own glorious likeness.

“And His name shall be in their foreheads.” The vision of His face will never be dimmed nor obscured, for the Spirit again writes, “there shall be no night there” (compare Revelation 21:25). So the perfections of the Lamb shall be ours with everlasting joy and we shall “reign forever and ever!”

“The Bride eyes not her garment,

But her dear Bridegroom’s face.

I will not gaze at glory,

But on the King of Grace.

Not at the crown He giveth,

But on His pierced hands.

THE LAMB IS ALL THE GLORY,

Of Immanuel’s Land!”

The Return of Our Lord

The Return of Our Lord

John Bramhall

The second advent of Christ will catch the unsuspecting world with surprise and terrible destruction (1 Thess. 5:3), but no believer should be unaware of its approach for it is written, "Ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:4). Yet, how many Christians are alert to the nearness of this great event? Do we actually realize the signs on the horizon that clearly indicate "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (Jas. 5:8)? John wrote, "The whole world lieth in the Wicked One" (1 John 5:19), and it is fast asleep in his arms; but no believer should be, for we are exhorted to be morally and spiritually awake! (1 Thess. 5:6-10).

Our Lord said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man," etc. (Matt. 24:36), yet in the same discourse He tells three parables that reveal the existence of signs prior to His return. The parable of the fig tree (Matt. 24:32, 33) which emphasizes the fact of signs; the second, about the days of Noah (Matt. 24:37-41) to demonstrate the need of signs, making the godly aware of His coming and arousing the unbelievers; the third, of the householder (Matt. 24:42-44) to establish the value of signs that encourage us to "Watch." It is the purpose of the Lord to awaken His people and guide them by these signs through the deceptive, dangerous days at the end; but it requires spiritual eyes and obedient hearts to discern His near return. Are we that awake today?

In addition, there are three special spheres of significant interest today, plainly declaring the approaching advent of our coming Lord, each of them foretold in the Word of God. They are — (1) The Political Realm. (2) The Moral Realm. (3) The Ecclesiastical Realm.

The Political Realm. What a world of paradoxes we live in! Special efforts are made for world peace, but we hear of “wars and rumors of wars.” Excessive spending to preserve life and health, but billions spent for life’s destruction! Increase of culture and refinement, yet never more barbarism in the world than today! Astounding developments in education, but never greater moral blindness! Great efforts to produce unity among nations, yet producing less cohesion than ever. How will it end?

The same question arose in the mind of Nebuchednezzar centuries ago, “what shall be in the latter days?” Through Daniel, God revealed that immediately prior to the second advent of Christ, a world empire with a federation of ten kings would exist (Dan. 2:43, 44, etc.). God confirmed it to Daniel in a later vision (Dan. 7:23, 24); and again to the Apostle John was it revealed (Rev. 17:12-14). Christ foretold the political conditions of the turbulent time prior to His coming (Matt. 24 and 25). His words of Matthew 24:4-8 seem descriptive of present day chaos. Surely the disintegration of nations is definitely upon us, rapidly coming into the final phase of Gentile history when this federal empire under Satan will rule the world (Rev. 13). BUT DO WE SEE THIS APPROACH?

The Moral Realm. The description of “the last days” is forcefully depicted by the Apostle in 2 Timothy 3:1-5

where he records the abnormal times when iniquity will bring the return of the old evils of heathenism in the midst of Christendom! Every feature in this prophecy prevails today! Let us not close our eyes to these facts for they definitely precede the advent of our coming Lord!

Paul also said that evil men and seducers from true godliness and right morals shall wax worse and worse, deceiving themselves and others (2 Tim. 3:13). Such men profess being enlightened and free men, but they only become darkened in their philosophies and enslaved in selfishness and sin, though claiming to be advancing. The rejection of God's Word for moral guidance can only increase the recession of men into moral darkness that becomes as heathenish and immoral as that of the ancient world!

In Revelations 9:20, 21, the Seer describes the character and conduct of human society at the end time prior to the Lord's return. Murder is a common crime, not exceptional. It is even true now! Sorceries, which in the Greek is the word "pharmakia," means "the administering of drugs" (Thayer's Lexicon) and this predominates today. The impure practice in the field of pharmacy has developed vice and sin for it is not restricted to the useful sphere of health. It's illicit use now inflames the vilest of passion that rot away the moral fibre of human society, leading to that which is next linked with it — Fornication. We see that society is now deluged with the subversion of the sanctity of marriage and its laws, for the sins of fornication and adultery have increasingly become a public feature of the social decay in these days. Dishonesty or Thefts prevail everywhere, with complete disregard of other's

rights, obliterating moral distinctions in order to practise fraud, theft and deceit wherever possible! Do these facts declare the near advent of Christ or not? Let God's Word speak to our hearts and consciences today!

The Ecclesiastical Realm. The New Testament contains serious warnings of the declining state of the Church toward the end. "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith" — drawn away by demoniac influence. Cheating their own consciences, men become exponents of the teachings that have seduced them (1 Tim. 4:1-7). The Apostle Peter confirms this in his second epistle also, chapter two. The unfortunate tolerance and lack of conviction in Christians today increases this departure, though they themselves may not depart from the truth.

Jude traces this in three stages: "The way of Cain ... the error of Balaam ... the gainsaying of Korah" (Jude 11). God demands atonement through the blood of Christ, but many ecclesiastics follow Cain's bloodless sacrifice, leading many to perdition. True men and women of God willingly sacrifice position, wealth and life for the sake of divine principles, but Balaam and his kind compromise principles for worldly position, wealth and personal advantage. The final stage of this apostasy is in "the gainsaying of Korah," who, though a priest of God, stood up publicly and contended against the truth of God to his own destruction and that of his followers (Numbers 16). Today, in the highest places of Christendom, many boldly stand up and oppose the Word of God to teach what they claim is advanced learning. The Scriptures hold out no hope of a general recovery from these things and warn that at the end the churches will be in a state of declension (Rev. 2 and 3). It is further unfortunate that even true believers have

“itching ears” and help multiply such teachers whose motive is only to please the ears and satisfy the taste of the people (1 Tim. 4:3, 4).

In the light of God’s Word, we must recognize that a strong ecumenical movement in Christendom will culminate in the final apostasy, following the rapture of the Church! (2 Thess. 2:1-3). The ultimate unity of all religions into one world system will come and accommodate the ideas of each constituent under the deception of the devil. Yet at the zenith of its ease and power it will meet its doom. The political federation will destroy the religious systems that have so long deceived the world, thus fulfilling God’s judgment (Rev.17:16, 17). In turn the political powers will be destroyed at the Lord’s appearing — Revelation 19:11-21. Do We Really Observe these things Coming or Are We Sleeping?

If these world-wide signs are fast developing toward their finality, my beloved fellow-believer, how near are we then to the blessed hope that Christ will come for His true ones? Are we morally and spiritually awake? Do we show by our character and conduct in life now, that we are waiting for our Lord from Heaven? Should we close our eyes to the evidences around us that were foretold in God’s Word, and not live as those who wait for HIM? God forbid! “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching!” (Luke 12:37). Then “let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord” (Luke 12:35, 36).

The Secret Ministry of Christ

The Secret Ministry of Christ

John Bramhall

Although advanced in years, Mr. John Bramhall of Charlotte, North Carolina, continues to keep busy with both his preaching and writing ministries.

The last, tender, and sympathetic words of Jesus were spoken to His disciples in the quietness of the upper room as recorded in John, chapters 14 to 16. They are filled with consolation, instruction, and warning, as His great heart breathed out His concern and His provision for them in view of His departure to the Father's house. Though few in number, these disciples were "His own" (John 13:1) and He loved them with unending love! Likewise, His love remains as faithful to us upon the earth known to Him as "His own," for we need the same tender ministry of His heart too. The Saviour reveals five precious secrets for us to learn in the oft repeated phrase—"These things have I spoken unto you" - by which five priceless lessons are taught us for our profit and His glory. Let us meditate prayerfully upon each of them.

The Secret of Communion

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you" (John 14:25). These words refer to the previous consolations He had spoken, closing with the revelation of true fellowship and communion with Him which will be manifested in two ways: (a) Love to His Person: "He that loveth Me... I will manifest Myself to

him" (John 14:21). He offers a perfect revelation of His glorious Person, but subject to a moral and spiritual qualification—a well- attested love for Himself! "If a man love Me...We will come unto him" (John 14:23). Love for Christ and His Person will draw the love of the Father to the believer, for the Father regards with special affection all who honor and obey His Son! (b) Obedience to His Word: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words" (John 14:23). The two are inseparable—Love and Obedience! Love is placed first, but its evidence is the second—obedience! This is the secret of true communion with Christ. Do I love Him? Do I obey Him? Does My soul know this secret of communion in blessed experience?

The Secret of Joy

"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). The similitude of the Vine is recorded in John 15:1-3; Christian fruit-bearing in verses 4 to 8; the Fathers love to Christ and Christ's love to the believers in verses 9 to 11. Thus the lesson of abiding is taught by the Saviour, which produces fruit for the Father's glory. In thus obeying His Word we continue to abide in His love (verses 9, 10). It is this way we learn the secret of His Joy! What was His joy? It was abiding (verse 10) and if in obedience we also keep the Word of God it will produce the Saviour's desire—"that My Joy might remain in you." Not the joy we may derive from Him; not the joy we may experience on His account, but rather the joy He experiences in the conscious possession of the Father's love! Abide in Me! bear fruit for the

Father's glory! and the secret of MY JOY will be yours!
Does my soul know this secret of joy?

The Secret of Steadfastness

"These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended" or "not be made to stumble" (John 16:1). The section from chapter 15, verses 18 through 27 of the Lord's discourse, is regarding "The Hatred of the World." Its certainty is declared in verses 18 and 19. Its intensity is revealed in verse 20: "They will persecute you." Its reason: "ye are not of the world." etc. (verse 19). It also hated Christ (verse 18). Its guilt (verse 22). All this hatred springs from the world's antipathy against God (verse 23), manifesting antagonism also against "His own," but He ministers His consolation: (a) It would be fellowship with Him (verse 18). (b) It would prove their separation from the world (verse 19). (c) They would have tokens of success and blessing nevertheless (verse 20b). (d) They would suffer not as evil doers, but as Christians (1 Peter 4:16), though the world's hatred of them, as in His case, would be without cause (verse 22). (e) They would not lack the aid of the Spirit of God (verse 26). (1) Neither would the world's hatred prevent them from accomplishing their mission (verse 27). These facts reveal the secret of steadfastness! Is my soul in the experiential knowledge of this?

The Secret of Prayer

"These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs" or "parables" (John 16:25). In verses 23 through 27 in this chapter, the Lord touches upon the Christian's prayer life, a most essential secret to learn, to know the

wonderful liberty we have in prayer to come unto the Father.

“Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you” (verse 23). This is our liberty in prayer—we may ask of the Father anything. There is success in prayer, guaranteed by three things: (a) The precious name of Christ (verses 24, 26). (b) The Saviour’s intercession—this is expected naturally (verse 26) but (c) “The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me,” etc. Thus the Father grants their requests. Have I learned the secret of receiving from the Father the answers to my prayers? What a lesson! so necessary to know that I must be enjoying the Father’s love to assure me of the answers to my humble petitions asked for the glory of God! Has my soul entered into this?

The Secret of Peace and Victory

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the would ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). “Love’s farewell” could be given over the closing words of the Saviour’s discourse from verse 28 through 33. He gives four fundamental facts of Christianity: (a) His Pre-existence—“I came out from the Father.” (b) His Incarnation—“I am come into the world.” (c) His Death—“Again, I leave the world.” (d) His Exaltation—“I go unto the Father” (verse 28). Faith’s confession of Christ is made by His disciples in verse 30, after which Jesus answers them saying, “Do ye now believe?” Then He gently admonishes them in verse 32—“Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” Would

their faith, though real, be capable of enduring the test that was soon to be put upon them? Obviously—No!—yet, the Father would still be with Him. Nevertheless, He leaves them with a cheering prediction:

1. The Blessing of His Peace, verse 33.

It was His parting bequest—“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). What a priceless legacy for His own in a troubled world. The peace which He Himself possessed! His spirit was never ruffled or fretted by the external circumstances of His lot; by the privations He endured; the labors He performed; the reproaches He encountered; the sufferings He experienced, and not even the death that He died! In the midst of all He was in “perfect peace” and this same peace He offers His own! Do I possess this in my own soul? Do I know the secret of this peace?

2. A Comforting Consolation

His victory over the world! He had overcome the world for Himself, so that His ability to support and succor them need not be doubted or questioned. He had overcome the world for them also. If they continued on with Him, they also in Him and through Him would prove victorious over all the tribulation they might suffer in the world for Him! “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). This is the secret of victory which He reveals to His own. Am I enjoying this in my daily life?

Five wonderful and vital secrets of ministry from the blessed heart of our Lord for His own; given in the quietness of that upper room alone with them, in order

that they may fully know His provision for their pilgrim pathway in this world. until He comes to take His own to “the Father’s House” above! Have you and I learned these secrets? May the Holy Spirit help us to do so!

The Shepherd Psalm

FFF 8:10 (Oct 1962)

The Shepherd Psalm

John Bramhall

Out of one hundred and fifty Psalms, the one we learn to love the most as children and to cherish the longest as adults, is none other than the Shepherd Psalm, the beloved twenty third!

In Psalm 22, I see my Saviour as the “Good Shepherd” in death, giving His life for the sheep (John 10:11). In Psalm 23, I see my Shepherd, “that Great Shepherd of the sheep,” guiding me through life toward home (Heb. 13:10). And in Psalm 24, I behold my King, as the “Chief Shepherd” appearing in future power and glory (1 Pet. 5:4).

In the Shepherd Psalm, there are three wonderful secrets, each based on the first five words, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” Possession of the Lord as MY Shepherd is the foundation of all the blessings in the Psalm: the secret of a happy life; the secret of a happy death; and the secret of a happy eternity.

Secret of a Happy Life

We live in a covetous and selfish world, but happy is that person who can say from the heart, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” A little girl once quoted these words, saying, “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want anything!” How right she was! The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament renders the verse thus:

“The Lord tends me as a shepherd: and I shall want nothing.”

Are we satisfied with this Shepherd? Having Him, we are perfectly cared for and should be satisfied with Him regardless of circumstances. This is the secret of a happy life, based on the perfection of His person and work.

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.” How vividly the “green pastures” and the “still waters” portray the abiding contentment of the believer. Digest this truth and drink of the blessings of perfect peace and contentment.

“He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.” He knows my wandering heart, but His perfect ministry of care never fails! With discipline and guidance, He leads me in His way. “Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord: for He shall pluck my feet out of the net” (Ps. 25:15). It can be said, “He will keep the feet of His saints” and provide them with perfect restoration and guidance.

“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.” The Psalm does not change in the middle, as some have thought, to that of an indoor banquet; rather, all the way through, it depicts the Shepherd’s care for His sheep. Surrounded by enemies, I still find my portion in Him. Perhaps bruised, weary and torn, yet I receive His healing and He generously makes my cup run over. “The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot” (Ps. 16:5). In Him there is perfect provision and blessing.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.” Unfailing “goodness” and “mercy” are sometimes called God’s faithful watch dogs over me. “He abideth faithful” (2 Tim. 2:13) and “faithful is He that promised,” saying, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 10:23; 13:5). What perfect faithfulness!

Are not these truths the facts of a happy life? Deny them if you can! Rather, enjoy them as you prove them all because you are able to say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

Secret of a Happy Death

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.” Our Shepherd is not alone faithful in life, but also in death.

Note these five precious facts: his composure — “I walk” — indicating no terror or panic, only tranquility; his confidence — “through” — it may be dark, but his confidence assures a safe arrival in the home above; his courage — “I will fear no evil” — the dangers of life are terminating and a wicked world is being left behind. In the valley, “What need I fear, since Thou art near?” his Companion — “Thou art with me” — divine protection and companionship are my portion. Who else could be with me here? None! Only the Shepherd; his comfort — “Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me” — the Shepherd’s rod of protection and staff of connection have ministered through life and will also be my comfort in death.

Secret of a Happy Eternity

“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever!” No better climax to the Psalm would be possible. After a “happy life;” after a “happy death” — the Psalmist enters into a happy eternity! Through the darkness of the valley he now emerges forever into the eternal sunshine of God’s presence. Blessed consummation!

How different for unbelievers! With no shepherd, such pass into the “blackness of darkness forever.” The famous orator and infidel, Robert Ingersoll, stood by the casket containing the remains of his deceased brother. His grief-stricken soul poured out its hopelessness and uncertainty of any reunion as he said:

“Is there beyond the silent night

An endless day?

Is death a door that leads to light?

We cannot say.

We do not know—

We hope and wait!”

This was the hopelessness of his soul, all because Robert Ingersoll refused the Good Shepherd, the Saviour — refusing to say in truth, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

How different for the believer in Christ! Listen to the consolation, comfort and cheering words of the Great Shepherd to His own sheep: “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you ... I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3). What a happy eternity indeed!

The Strength of Christ

FFF 14:5 (May 1968)

The Strength of Christ

John Bramhall

Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?" said Isaiah as he described the coming day of the Lord and His judgments coming on this world (Isa. 2:22). Man's strength is weak! for the Lord "taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man" (Psa. 147:10). The legs of men bend beneath their burdens and "in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble... the strong men shall bow themselves" (Eccl. 12:3). Jesus described the present conditions of the world which precede His return, saying, "Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear," etc. Read Luke 21:25 and 26.

Today, in these circumstances, we must rest in The strength and steadfastness of Christ alone. In contrast to weak men, the Bride describes her Beloved as One with "legs as pillars of marble" (Song of Solomon 5:15). This figurative description symbolizes that both strength and steadfastness are HIS alone!

1. The symbol of strength:

(a) Our redemption rests upon those "pillars of marble," for on Him was laid the weight of His people's sins from the beginning to the end of the world. See Isaiah 53:6. Did He bear them ALL? Absolutely! — for "His legs are pillars of marble." In type of His unfailing strength, His

legs were not broken on the Cross. See John 19:31-36. The legs of the railer crucified with Him were broken. The legs of the penitent thief were broken, for his own strength was weakness and all his help was in Another!

But they broke not the legs of the Lord Jesus for His own Father, though bruising Him, (Isa. 53:10) would grant a token of His love and care to signify that everlasting strength is Christ's, even in the midst of weakness. No human or heavenly power dared to break those legs for infallible Scripture had declared that "A bone of Him shall not be broken." He was the true Passover, Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12 and I Corinthians 5:7.

(b) — The maintenance of His Church is given to His care and His unfailing strength alone assures of its safety and permanence. Can HE sustain the weight? Listen to His words — "On this ROCK I will build My assembly; and hades' gates shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, JND Trans). No power can prevail to destroy His Church for "His legs are pillars of marble" — possessing unfailing strength! Read Ephesians 5:25-27 and note that the glorious consummation of His Bride is definitely assured, praise His blessed Name!

(c) — The burdens of all His followers are cast upon Him. "Cast thy burdens upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Psa. 55:22). Read 1 Peter 5:7. All their fears and countless burdens He invites them to place on Himself. Thousands upon thousands have done it! Thousands are doing it! Child of God are YOU doing it? Can He endure ALL the weight? Yes! — for "His legs are pillars of marble."

2. The symbol of steadfastness:

Steadfastness is symbolized as well as strength. In all men, from Adam downward — “the unequal legs of the lame” have been seen; halting, stumbling and falling in the way, but the legs of the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45) are pillars of marble, upright, even, steadfast and unmovable.

(a) — Satan proved them: (Matt. 4:1-11 or Lu. 4:1-13). Jesus walks wearily from the wilderness, hungry, with knees weak through fasting. Satan tests whether those upright limbs will bend before him! “IF Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread”. Stoop! Eat and satisfy Thy hunger! says the devil. HE stoops not! He halts not! He walks on, saying, “Man shall not live by bread alone.” He bends not! for HIS legs are pillars of marble! Praise GOD!

Satan takes Him to a pinnacle of the Temple, saying, “Cast Thyself down,” etc. Even on the narrow confine of the pinnacle Jesus stands still and moves not! What a very dangerous place is a religious pinnacle! He answers Satan, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God,” etc. “His legs are pillars of marble!”

Satan makes one more desperate effort, more daring; for nothing will satisfy him but the prostrate bending of those pillars in obedience. The kingdoms of the world and their glory are shown the Lord. All pillars move not! He will never bend His knees to Satan! “Get thee hence, Satan” etc. is the reply and Satan flees, confounded and defeated. He must add his reluctant testimony to the Bride’s, “His legs are pillars of marble!” Every other man has bowed the knee to sin and Satan but not the

Son of God, even Jesus! What steadfastness! Truly “His legs are pillars of marble!”

(b) — The saints prove the steadfastness of His legs. For us His legs are still “pillars of marble” as He dwells at the right hand of God above. (1) He is our great High Priest (Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14-16), the unfailing source of mercy and grace for our help in every time of need, always dependable! (2) He is our great Intercessor (Heb. 7:25; Rom. 8:34) steadfastly praying for His own in the present world. Read the 17th. of John and digest His great High Priestly prayer! (3) He is our great Advocate — (1 John 2:1, 2) never failing to maintain our cause and our relationship with His Father above. Satan can often accuse of sin for he is “the accuser of the brethren” (Rev. 12:10), but even in Heaven Satan finds that our Advocate has “legs as pillars of marble.”

(c) — The world will prove the steadfastness of His legs. He alone has the power and right to “set His right foot upon the sea, and His left foot on the earth” as recorded (Rev. 10: 1-6). What a mighty description of His power is given when He is about to take the kingdoms of the world for Himself! What marvelous legs are these!

The world will know the power of those legs when “His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem toward the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, a very great valley: and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.” Read Zechariah chapter 14. At the glory of His return to the earth, Jesus will manifest His great strength and steadfastness as He establishes His Millennial Kingdom. The world will find

that “His legs are pillars of marble!” for “the Lord shall be king over all the earth” (Zech. 14:9).

3. Our present encouragement

If we are unfaithful, He abides faithful, for He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:13). Thank God for HIS strength and steadfastness!

The Thread and the Cable

Though waves and billows o’er me pass

In whelming floods of ill,

Within the haven of God’s love

My soul is anchored still;

For though the stress and strain of life

My thread of faith may break,

The cable of HIS faithfulness

No storm can ever shake.

Annie Johnson Flint

Beloved, let us always remember — “His legs are pillars of marble!” (S. of S. 5:15).

The Valley of Death

The Valley of Death

John Bramhall

Life has many valleys and canyons, each one with its darkness, danger and despair. Through them, the believer proves the faithfulness of the Good Shepherd, who dispels the darkness, delivers from the danger, and lifts the heart above the despair.

Yet ultimately, the last valley will be reached — the valley of death —if the Lord be not come. For some, it may be difficult to face, but not for others; but the comfort of the Scriptures can provide for the believer God's sustaining grace in such an hour.

The Good Shepherd who has proven Himself to us in the valleys of life, will also prove Himself sufficient for the valley of death. What He has been, He still will be — “that great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb. 13:10).

In expressing the deep conviction of his soul in view of such an hour, “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me,” the sweet Psalmist of Israel revealed four precious facts to comfort us in the valley of death.

His Composure

The tranquility of his soul is indicated by the two words, “I walk.” There was no evidence of terror or panic as he faced the last dark valley; nothing but composure of mind as he entered the vale. A deliberate steadiness of mind is seen, suggesting that he would pass calmly on his way through, permitting nothing and no one to cause

alarm. With equanimity he faced the vale, to walk with steady composure “through the valley of the shadow of death.” He would not run in terror, nor dart to and fro in panic. He would take the valley in his stride.

His Confidence

“I will walk through,” he wrote. He considered himself a “through passenger” with a non-stop journey before him — no doubts as to the certainty of reaching the desired haven. What blessed optimism and confidence he possessed!

The valley might have been dark; the mountains overshadowing on every side; the path rugged and steep, painful and sore. But the outcome was sure — “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever!”

The end of the valley would bring him out of darkness into eternal light; out of pain into eternal balm; out of strife into eternal peace. Instead of a temporary pilgrimage on earth, he would then reach his eternal home with all its glory.

His Courage

“I will fear no evil.” There is nothing to fear, says the Psalmist. The former evils of life cannot touch him in this valley. They are left behind: the evils of sin, self, Satan, and the world.

His Companion

This is the greatest fact of all, giving eternal value to all the others: “Thou art with me!” Blessed Companion: “The Lord is my Shepherd,” and He who has crossed the valleys of life with me will also walk through the last one — the valley of death.

Loved ones cannot go with me; friends cannot accompany me; but I cannot go through without Him! The Great Shepherd of the sheep will be with me ever, bringing me into "the house of the Lord for ever."

In the preceding verses of the Psalm, David speaks about the Shepherd; but here, in the valley of death, he speaks to the Shepherd. Who else would he rather have with him? He alone is the One to whom he can express his heart and rejoice that his Shepherd for life is also his Shepherd for death.

On a bleak day in January 1681, two Scotch lassies were to be hung for worshipping God in a way forbidden by law. As they emerged from their cell, they were told to walk across the yard to the gallows. One said to the other, "Come on, Bell. This is our great day! Let's sing!" And immediately they began to sing together:

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want,

He makes me down to lie

In pastures green;

He leadeth me The quiet waters by.

"Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,

Yet will I fear none ill;

For Thou art with me; and Thy rod

And staff me comfort still."

And as they stood pinioned upon the fatal platform, they concluded their touching duet:

"Goodness and mercy all my life

Shall surely follow me;

And in God's house for evermore
My dwelling-place shall be."

Theirs was genuine composure, confidence, and courage
— for their Companion to the end was the Lord Jesus
Christ Himself, the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd
— the very same One who is ready and waiting to
accompany each of His own through the valley and
upward to our heavenly home.

The Worship of a Pardoned Sinner

The Worship of a Pardoned Sinner

John W. Bramhall

Scripture Reading: Luke 7:37-38

Mr. John W. Bramhall of Charlotte, N.C., a frequent contributor to Focus, shares with us many helpful devotional thoughts on this Israelite woman who fully knew the meaning of her sins forgiven — and demonstrated it!

This deeply interesting narrative is found only in Luke's Gospel. It reveals the fervent love of a pardoned sinner toward her Saviour. Uninvited, she entered the house of Simon the Pharisee where Jesus was a guest. Her conduct and her actions that followed were traceable to one great fact. She had been forgiven much and so she loved much. Her love was the effect of her forgiveness, not the cause. It was the consequence of her forgiveness, not the condition. It was the result of her forgiveness, not the reason. It was the fruit of her forgiveness, not the root. Forgiveness came before she poured her adoration at the Saviour's feet. She was absolutely heedless of her surroundings and the persons present, for her heart was wholly centered on the One whom she worshipped and adored — Jesus alone!

How or where she obtained her pardon is not revealed. She may have heard the precious words of Jesus saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Perhaps she was the Jerusalem sinner of John's Gospel to whom the Lord said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no

more" (John 8:11). We do not know, but this we know — she was a pardoned sinner bringing to her Benefactor the worship, love and adoration of her heart. Let us consider how she did it.

She Stood at His Feet

The expression, "Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house," literally means that He "reclined," according to custom, upon a couch with His feet extended out behind Him. Thus it was convenient for the woman to do what she did at His feet. Note the place of humility she assumes — "at His feet," not at His head. Why "at His feet"? It properly conveyed her deep realization of unworthiness to be the recipient of His eternal pardon and forgiveness. Is not this place of humility the proper one for every forgiven sinner?

She Wept at His Feet

Why such copious weeping, for the tears flowed down on the feet of Jesus profusely? Were they not tears of genuine sorrow and repentance at the memory of her many sins? Were they not also tears of joy and relief because her sins were all pardoned and her guilt was all gone? The Saviour said, "Her sins, which were many, are forgiven" (Luke 7:47). Were they not tears of love and gratitude from the depth of her soul for the One who had spoken words of grace and compassion to her sinful heart and brought divine peace? (see Romans 5:1). Have we ever wept at Its feet, being overwhelmed with gratitude for the Saviour who has spoken to us and said, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee"? (Matthew 9:2).

She Washed His Feet

Simon, the Pharisee, failed to show the common courtesy and hospitality to his illustrious Guest (Luke 7:44-47), but upon the dusty, soiled feet of the Son of God the penitent tears of appreciation flowed, to bathe them with the fountain of love springing up in her redeemed heart. The cold heart of Simon may refuse to perform the usual task of hospitality for the Lord, but the Father above sends the penitent, redeemed sinner to wash the feet of His only begotten Son. If Simon would not provide, the warm springs of a pardoned sinner's heart gush forth with sufficient tears to bathe and cleanse His blessed feet. What a fountain of love it was and how He must have appreciated it!

She Wiped His Feet

The penitent woman did not possess a towel with which to wipe His feet, as the Lord has possessed in John 13 when He washed His disciples' feet. She used her luxurious and abundant hair! "If a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her," wrote God, through the Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:15. That which was her glory, she stoops and uses to wipe the feet of the Saviour. What an act of surrender and devotion this was! It was the recognition and acknowledgment of His Lordship. Have we done the same? Have we laid our glory at His feet? Have we really said, "King of my life I crown Thee now; Thine shall the glory be"? God has said, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

She Kissed His Feet

Literally, the words declare that “she ardently kissed; she covered His feet with kisses.” It was not just once or twice, but many times, over and over again. Why did those blessed feet have such an attraction to her? She could say with the prophet Isaiah, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, thy Cod reigneth!” (Isaiah 52:7).

No more precious feet ever walked on earth than the feet of the Son of God in His incarnation. They were worthy of all her kisses. The traitor with evil in his heart drew near unto Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and planted the betrayal kiss on His lovely face. What a travesty! What evil daring! (Luke 22:47-48). Not so with the “chief of sinners,” for her heart was overwhelmed by His love and she generously pours out upon His feet the expression of her worship and adoration. Should not the Church today, the Bride, stoop down also and “kiss His feet”? Should not the “chief of sinners,” then, be found willing to “kiss His feet”?

She Anointed His Feet

This city woman brought with her “an alabaster box of ointment,” and as the last act of her devotion she poured it upon His blessed feet. She had washed them, wiped them, kissed them, and now she anointed them. The costly perfumed oil became for Him the perfume of her heart’s love and affection. That fragrant love of hers to Him gave off a far greater odor of sweetness than the very ointment she poured on His feet. Who can tell what this meant to the Saviour’s heart? The greatest present

He could receive, the fulness of love and adoration by a pardoned sinner, must have been unspeakably precious to our Lord. Lavishly she poured the ointment on His feet. Was it wasted? Never! Worship and adoration of the Saviour is never wasted, for it is a far greater act of devotion than the activities of service! But who realizes this? Not many. Yet our service for Him would be of greater value if we worshipped Him more.

The moment is soon to come when all the redeemed in glory will fall down “before the Lamb” (see Revelation 5:8). The whole multitude of saints will fall “at His feet” in adoration and worship. Yet why should we wait for that day to do it? It would please Him and glorify Him now during the time of His rejection if we would stay “at His feet.” Pride, selfishness, jealousy, bitterness, division and many other evils would disappear from our midst if we would get down “at His feet.” But who is willing to take this lowly place which is the proper place for all God’s people to be?

May the Spirit of God speak to our consciences and hearts in living power and bring us where we belong today — AT HIS FEET!

We quote the following words that were found in the Bible of J.N. Darby after his departure from this scene:

Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus,

This is the place for me.

Here I have learned deep lessons,

Truth that has set -me free.

Free from myself, Lord Jesus,

Free from the ways of men;

Chains of thought that have bound me,
Never can bind again.
None but Thyself, Lord Jesus,
Conquered this wayward will.
But for Thy love constraining,
I had been wayward still.

What Am I Worth?

What Am I Worth?

John Bramhall

We are pleased to have another article from the pen of John Bramhall. Our brother has served the Lord for many years in the United States and Canada. This article should provoke a spiritual assessment.

Scripture Readings:

Leviticus 1:1-9; 27:1-9

The opening and closing of many books in the Bible present vivid contrasts. Some open by introducing us to a pinnacle of glory and in their closing may leave us in darkness or despair. Others begin in a valley of gloom, but ultimately end upon the highest place of glory. A profitable study along this line will prove to be edifying if followed through.

The Book of Leviticus

This book presents an impressive contrast between the first and last chapters, worthy of our careful meditation. In chapter one the ritual of the burnt offering is recorded, which was the foundation of all God's relation with Israel. This offering confessed that sin had raised a barrier between man and God, but the sacrifice of a burnt offering, a type of the death of Christ, declared that the gulf was righteously bridged, and that it brought the offerer into the place of acceptance.

In the last chapter "a singular vow" is regulated, by which men or women dedicated themselves

unreservedly to God's service and brought into His sanctuary a sum of money that represented the priestly valuation of their worth to the testimony of God. This was the manner in which an Israelite could express his or her appreciation for the value of that sacrifice that had bridged the great barrier of sin and had provided them acceptance before God. Let us consider the two portions of Scripture prayerfully.

(1) The Burnt Offering

There is much typical teaching in all the offerings, but for our present purpose we will confine ourselves to three particular features of the burnt offering that distinguished it from the others.

(a) By its name — “THE OLAH” — meaning, the ascending offering because the body of the victim was wholly consumed upon the altar. In contrast, the sin-offering was burnt outside the camp upon the ground, without an altar. The peace offering differed also, for it was eaten by the priestly family and the offerer too, but the burnt offering was wholly for God. The Hebrew word translated “to burn” in Leviticus 1, means “to turn into fragrance” and is used in the first three chapters, but from chapter four and onwards, beginning with the sin-offering, another word — “Seraph” — is used, which implies “to consume to ashes.” Thus we may recognize the wonderful type of Christ in purest and most fragrant incense. His thoughts, emotions, words and actions were a perfect delight to Heaven above, as also was His atoning death.

(b) The second distinction in the burnt offering was the disposition of the skin of the sacrifice. In the sin-offering, the skin was burnt “without the camp.” In the

burnt offering, the offering priest was privileged to retain the skin for himself (Lev. 7:8). The priest would instinctively know what to do with it, for as far back as the garden of Eden, the Lord God had taught Adam that “coats of skin” alone were suitable coverings for poor sinners who would stand in the presence of God (Gen. 3:21). What a precious type of the believing sinner being clothed in the righteousness of Christ! “Dressed in beauty not mine own” — but seen by God covered with the beauty and perfect provision of Christ, His own Beloved Son!

“Done is the work that saves,
Once and for ever done;
Finished the righteousness
That clothes the unrighteous one.
The love that blesses us below
Is flowing freely to us now.”

(c) The third distinction of the burnt sacrifice is that it secured for the offerer acceptance before God. “If his offering be a burnt-offering of the herd, he shall present it a male without blemish: at the entrance of the tent of meeting shall he present it, for his acceptance before Jehovah” (Lev. 1:3 JND Trans.). How applicable is this type, illuminating the words of the New Testament: “Accepted in the beloved, in whom we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

(2) The Singular Vow

Contrast our two chapters in Leviticus and note this: The first reveals that Christ is for me in the presence of

God: the last tells what I can be for Christ before the world. The first unfolds God's valuation of my Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: the last discloses the value of my service for Him. The first tells that Christ Himself is the measure of my acceptance with His Father: the last erects a standard by which my consecration to Christ can be measured. If I then rest in what Christ is for me, surely I cannot neglect what He wants me to be for Him!

(a) The Four Classifications of God's Valuation. (1) From twenty to sixty years of age, the male is valued at 50 shekels; the female, at 30 shekels. (2) From five to twenty years of age, the male is valued at 20 shekels; the female, at 10 shekels. (3) From one month to five years of age, the male is valued at 5 shekels; the female, at 3 shekels. (4) From sixty years and above, the male is valued at 15 shekels; the female, at 10 shekels. The distinction between the male and female can but suggest an application; the former indicating the energetic activity of the testimony and the other, the passiveness of it. These two graces were found residing in the Lord Jesus when on earth and should be found in us. In no wise would they suggest a valuation on the male's contribution to the testimony today above the other.

(b) The Priestly Measure of Valuation. The values placed by God upon His people in their devotion was estimated by the priest himself and performed by him through God's own standard of measurement — "according to his ability that vowed shall the priest value him" (Lev. 27:28). Carefully note the classifications of God's value upon His people and you will see that from one month of age to sixty years and over, He valued their devotion to His testimony. It is the same today; the youngest babe in

Christ but a month old has a value to God! Even in years of physical weakness at 60 and over there still was a value upon them, but let us not forget that there were exceptions such as Moses who at 120 years of age was still strong, for "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:7). Likewise Caleb at 85 years could say, "As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in" (Josh. 14:11).

Let me ask my heart this question: "How old am I in Christ?" Let me estimate the months or the years as the case may be and ask myself "What am I worth?" in my devotion to Christ. Is it three shekels or is it fifty shekels? Surely my value to Him should increase as the months and years go by. Let me get into His presence, the presence of my great High Priest above and search my heart, asking Him to place His own value upon my devotion to His testimony! What will HE say? What will His valuation be? Should I not be continually showing an increasing appreciation for all He is for me and all He has done for me, by increasing devotion to His Person, and His Name? May God grant it shall be so, for He is worthy of "my heart, my life, my all!"

With Christ

With Christ

John Bramhall

Have you ever considered that in a very few words the Scriptures describe the blessedness of those who have gone to be with Christ? Yet these few words are adequate to convey to our hearts the eternal blessedness of that experience.

WHERE ARE THEY? This is a question the Scriptures answer in regard to any Christian loved ones who have gone before. Two words sufficiently cover this point; they are found in Philippians 1:23, "WITH CHRIST." Do you remember Peter's writing in his second epistle, chapter 1 and verse 18, of being "with HIM on the holy mount?" On that occasion he expressed the great joy of that privilege, saying, "Lord, it is GOOD for us to be here." He was right, for the glory of Christ's presence is unequalled. Then David the Psalmist declares in Psalm 16:11: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy." Does not Colossians 3:4 tell us that the eternal blessedness of departed saints is to be "WITH HIM in glory?" How precious must the words of Jesus have sounded in the dying thief's ears, "Today shalt thou be WITH ME in paradise." What blessedness, "WITH CHRIST!"

WHAT IS IT LIKE? This is another good question to raise. Again, two words in the same Philippian chapter fully describe it, saying, "FAR BETTER." There is the suggestion that the glory of being with Christ has no comparison on earth. In contrast to all earthly things, the privilege of being in His glorious presence is

supremely higher. The revised version of the Scriptures renders the words, "VERY FAR BETTER." J. N. Darby's translation reads "VERY MUCH BETTER." Moffatt's rendering is, "FAR THE BEST." The saints who have gone before are really enjoying a grand time in His presence; not one longs to be back here on earth. Their new circumstances, they answer, are "FAR BETTER." It almost makes one's heart long to be with them, does it not ?

HOW DO THEY FEEL? Surely it is not amiss to ask this. I believe they would answer in the words of 2 Corinthians 5:8, "We are willing to be absent from the body, and to be present "WITH THE LORD." The Revised Version renders the word "present" as meaning "at home." Oh, they answer, "We are AT HOME !" Young's translation suggests, "To be among one's own people, to be AT HOME." So another two words would tell of their blessedness, "AT HOME." Not one is a stranger to the other, though they have never met before. What a company of happy people in His Presence, "AT HOME." No hunger or thirst in that HOME, no scorching trials of earth, no tears of grief and pain. They are "AT HOME," the place of the "living fountain of water" (Rev. 7:16-17).

ARE THEY EMPLOYED? This should be another question to consider. What is the answer? Two words again cover it, "SERVING CHRIST." "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and SERVE HIM day and night in His temple" (Rev. 7:15). "His servants shall SERVE HIM, and they shall see HIS FACE." Yes, SERVICE and WORSHIP are their constant occupation. The service is better than any ever done on earth; the adoration, fuller than any ever rendered below to His blessed Person and Work. How glorious to be thus employed in eternity! Will

it not be grand when we also enter upon our heavenly employment in His eternal Presence!

Eight words! But oh, how full of meaning they are: "WITH CHRIST," "FAR BETTER," "AT HOME," "SERVING CHRIST!" Let us remember that we who are still here should find encouragement to go on faithfully for HIM, from the words of Hebrews 10:37, which say, "For yet A VERY LITTLE WHILE He that comes will come, and will not delay" (JND). Then will be the reunion morning, in the land where partings shall never be known, for we shall all be "WITH CHRIST." Moreover, "So shall we EVER be WITH THE LORD."