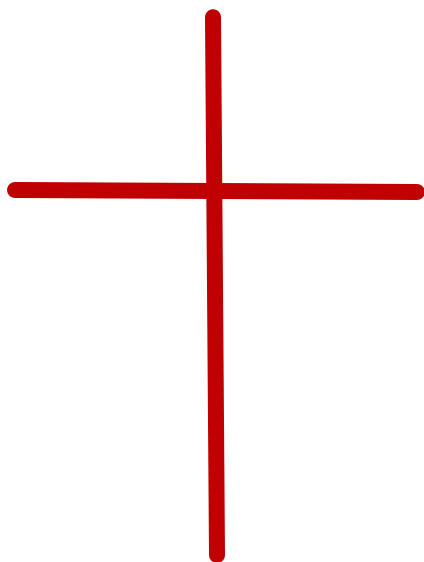




Reason for Hope

Bishop Jerry L. Ogles



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Books published by Bishop Jerry L. Ogles

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The Ten Commandments

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Three Gifts of the Magi

Lenten Devotional: Psalms 22 & 23

*"Which hope we have as an anchor of
the soul, both sure and stedfast, and
which entereth into that within the
Veil;"*

(Hebrews 6:19)

Foreword

As we approach the end of the second decade of the Twenty-first century the world we live in seems to be empty of hope. This emptiness is expressed in the chaos and anger we see in social media, in print, on the airwaves, the streets of our once fair cities, in the institutes of higher learning and now at the primary and secondary school level. Why? The Father of Lies, Satan, must sow this discontent in order to distract humans from the hope that is in the Gospels and the Word of God, the Bible. Satan knows that he is defeated. When Christ uttered those last words on the Cross...“It is finished,” Satan knew that he was finished. Not immediately, but in the annals of time, Satan knows that his time is short. This is why he is trying his best to keep humans from realizing that there is another way. The **Only Way**. Christ Jesus.

So why does this help the cause of evil? If one is without hope then one will seek the easiest and fastest way to bury or ignore that hopelessness. Hedonism, a rampant need to do all things in a wanton and destructive way, is the way of the pagan. The wild abandon of a constant party is the preview of the lost. We read of this abandon in the days of Noah, and what now seems to be a similar wanton abandonment in today’s world. Time is short beloved, we need to share the Gospel, which is the Reason for Hope.

If a people are so invested in finding “happiness” in all manner of riotous living they won’t have the time or the inclination to understand their grave danger in that lifestyle. Again, a great way for Satan to keep the human race from seeking the hope that is there in plain sight.

Here is Hope

Bishop Jerry Ogles has done it again: with a series of lessons from the Word and the world experiences of people of faith, he has been able to shine light on the simple message of hope. With this compact volume of straight forward simple lessons of faith, Ogles offers to the reader a

myriad of examples of hope and renewal. There are lessons from great hymns of the faith, examples from the life of Christ, experiences from those who have gone before, all pointing to the great truth: there is a reason for hope.

As believers in Christ Jesus we should always have hope. With this book our people of faith can share this hope with a dying world. There are so many messages of hate and discord flying around through the air that many people have a great fear of the future. We can help calm the way. With the simple Gospel message and very useful tools such as this devotional book, believers can be equipped to share the hope, give hope, and express hope that is so desperately needed in times like these.

I pray that the reader of this excellent example of “faith once delivered,” will seek every opportunity to share this wonderful message of hope to all they have contact with, here or there or wherever they may be. May God bless you in your devotional time; may He give you great peace and the knowledge that there is hope in the Word of the Lord. Always remember the central point of God’s message: there is only **One Way** to the Father and that is His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.

“. . . I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” (John 11:25)

Amen and amen.

Christ alone in Trinity Season;

† Roy

Rt. Rev. Roy Morales-Kuhn M.A.,
Diocese of the Epiphany,
AOC International, Inc.



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Table of Contents

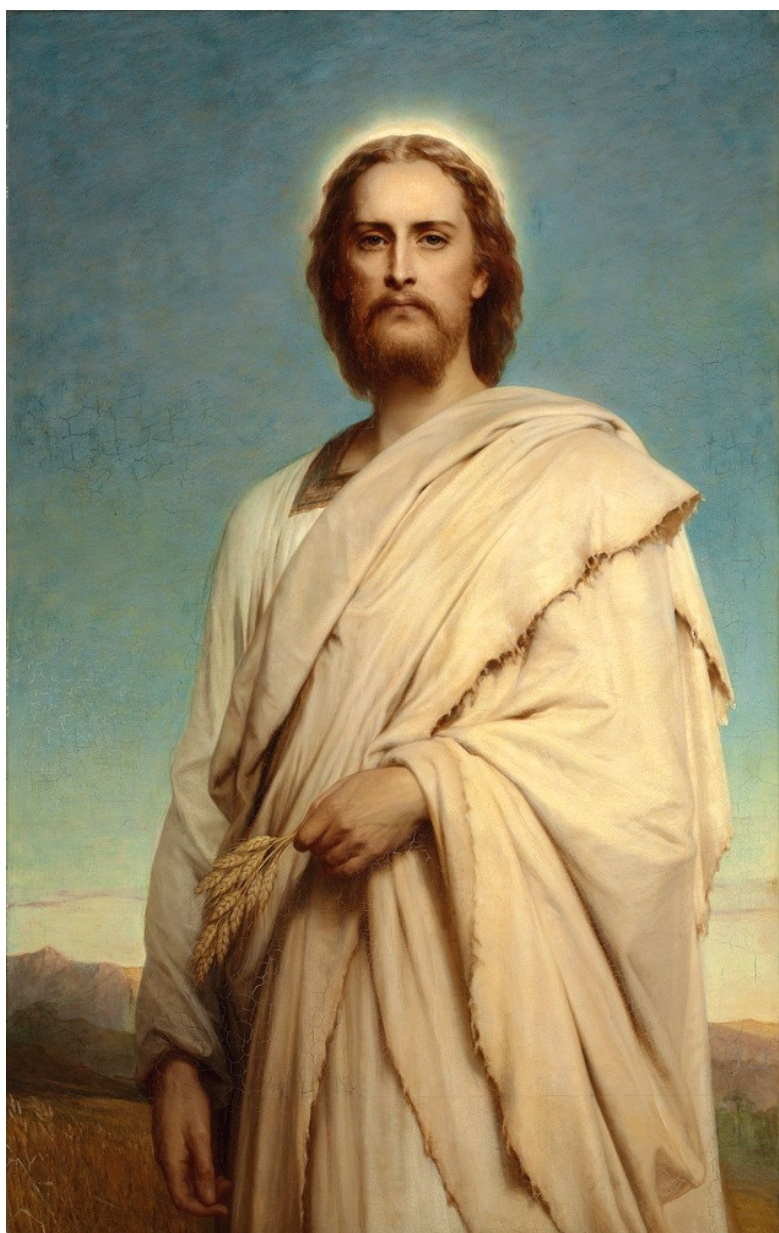
Reason for Hope	16
Hallelujah for the Cross	22
Same Mind of Christ.....	26
The End of All Things	30
Casting all Your Care on Him	36
The Two Lions	44
The Way, the Truth, and the Life.....	50
Keeper of Souls.....	56
Trees of Righteousness	62
Sufficient Grace	68
Prayer of the Closet.....	74
The Unchangeable Christ.....	82
The Seal	88
Standing Alone?.....	94
I Shall Not Be Moved!	100
The Secret Place of the Most High	104
Whispering Hope	110
The Hope of Christ.....	116
Footnotes.....	120
Bio-Sketch - Bishop Jerry L. Ogles	126

List of Illustrations

The Good Shepherd - Bartolomé Esteban Murillo	10
Welcome by Jesus Christ - The Catholic Guy	14
Christ of the Cornfield - Thomas Dicksee	15
The Ascension of Christ - Cornelis de Visscher	29
St. Peter's AOC National Chapel Chancel.....	34
Jesus and the Twelve Apostles - Gustave Dore	35
Christ - Fritz von Uhde	41
Jesus Statue in Arkansas - Betty Hoffman.....	42
Jesus Tempted - Carl Bloch	43
William Tyndale Burnt at the Stake - Foxe's BoM	48
Statute of Jesus - AOC National Chapel.....	49
Mount Sinai - Mohammed Moussa.....	60
The Date Palm - Keil's Nachfolger.....	61
A Church in the Trees - John Constable	66
Martin Luther as an Augustine Monk - Lucas Cranach....	67
The Infant Samuel at Prayer - Joshua Reynolds	73
Jesus Praying in the Garden - Gustave Dore.....	80
Jesus - Mountain to Pray - James Tissot.....	81
Our Lord Jesus Christ - James Tissot.....	86
Christian Cross Red Wax Seal - ChristArt.com.....	87

Cross Signet Ring - eBay	87
Angels Holding the Four Winds - Matthias Gerung	92
Luther at the Diet of Worms - Anton Werner	93
Martin Luther - Lucas Cranch the Elder	93
Birches by a Woodland Stream - Julie Hart Beers.....	99
King David Playing the Harp - Gerard van Honthorst....	103
King David in Prayer - Pieter de Grebber.....	108
Guardian Angel - Author Unknown.....	109
Jan Hus (John Hus) - unknown	114
Jesus in Garden of Gethsemane - Heinrich Hofmann.....	115
The Consoling Christ - Bernard Blockhorst.....	118
The Good Shepherd - James Tissot.....	119
Presiding Bishop AOC, Jerry L. Ogles - CFP.....	125





Reason for Hope

“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? ¹⁴But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; ¹⁵But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: ¹⁶Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. ¹⁷For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. ¹⁸For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: ¹⁹By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; ²⁰Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. ²¹The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: ²²Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.” (1 Peter 3:13-22)

There is only one sure and certain sanctuary and home for the Soul - that is the heart! No intruder can enter therein without express invitation of the owner. But the human heart is weak and susceptible to every deceitful salesman who comes knocking, and the devil sends them often to the hearts of prospective recipients. However, if the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into your heart, though the devil's minions may continue to call often, your heart is safely defended from their uninvited intrusions. *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* (1 John 4:4) As St. Peter avers: *“And who is he that will harm you,*

16

if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter 3:13) There was a time in America in which moral goodness was valued at a high premium by Justice. Those days, however, have gone glimmering along with the love of that Moral Law which underlies our beloved Constitution. What has forever been good under God's Law may now be considered **bad** under man's fickle laws; and that which is condemned by God's Law is now labelled good under the decadent law of man.

We are arrived at the condition of that woeful warning given by the prophet Isaiah: *"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"*

²¹*Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!"* (Isaiah 5:20-21) Though there is no such thing in either history or Scripture, we have come to accept the ungodly union of two men or two women in a so-called marriage relationship. This is a filthy and reprehensible practice that has never been acceptable in history until now. But God is on the Throne, *"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:"* ²⁵*Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.* ²⁶*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:*

²⁷*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*

²⁸*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."* (Romans 1:24-28) Not only do their sins damn them in this life, but also in

the eternity to come. All sorts of dreaded and deadly diseases arise from sexual impurity. Future generations will continue to suffer a growing epidemic of such plagues.

So how should the righteous live under such evil circumstances? By not becoming a party to the evil!

We must resist unto the shedding of blood, or even death. Lord Acton¹ was right, "The only thing worse than war is the belief that nothing is worth fighting for." We are at war, and there is something worth fighting for in Christ! "*But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled.*" (1 Peter 3:14) Though we are pressed by the enemy to the geographic boundary of Jordan Banks, we know something the enemy does not know: Legions of Angels wait in reserve beyond that river to deal a hard blow to Satan's desultory forces at a moment he least expects.

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." (1 Peter 3:15) Tell me, pray tell, how we can give a reason for the hope that is in us if we do not know the source of that hope in God's Holy Word. Should we not study that hope?: "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"¹⁶ *But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness."* (2 Timothy 2:15-16) Lazy scholars get poor marks in school, and in Heaven.

Our strong breastplate of defense is a good conscience. The prosecuting attorneys have an uphill battle if they cannot bring up an evil past to the bar against their charge. "*Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.*"¹⁷ *For it is better,*

if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.” (1 Peter 3:16-17) Why would the wicked be ashamed? It is because all of their slander and accusations against you shall wither in the Light of God's Sun. In the old days, I might have had to go to jail for conducting a marriage between two men or two women. I would deserve the jail time. But today, a godly minister may be forced to served jail time for refusing to conduct such an ungodly marriage.

Which man do you think enjoys a happier conscience as well as the favor of God? Valid law requires a precedent, and we have the greatest of all: *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:”* (1 Peter 3:18) If we are His, man can do little to harm us since we have already suffered death to self and a resurrection in Him. Note that Christ suffered once and for all for our sins - there is no further sacrifice that will appease. We do not sacrifice Christ anew with our sins, or with our ill-natured Masses or Eucharists. The Lamb was historically slain in the time of Christ; but long before the coming of Christ there was the Divine atoning love, there was the vicarious suffering of the Savior. And now, although no longer humbled in the flesh, Christ has not lost that peculiar element and attribute of the Divine nature — namely, substitution, imputation, vicariousness. Still He suffers in all our sufferings. He is afflicted in all our afflictions. Christ is our **Substitute**, and that one word better summarizes the Gospel than any other.

There is a touching story told regarding a body of men who had taken part in a rebellion, and were sentenced to have every tenth man of their number shot to deter others from doing what they had done. Among these were two, a father and son. We can fancy we see the men drawn up in a long line. Fixing, perhaps, on the first man by lot, he is marked

out for death, and every tenth man thereafter, counting from him. The father and son stand together, and as the son runs his eye along the line he discovers that his father is a doomed man. He realizes what it will be to have their family left without a head, his mother a widow, the old home stripped of its light and joy, and, quick as thought, he steps in where his father stood, and falls in his stead. He becomes his father's "substitute," and, if you ask the father in years after how he was saved, with a tear in his eye and a quivering voice, he will tell you he was saved by a substitute - that substitute his most loved and loving son.

Dr. Carey, the great Indian scholar and missionary, tells of his visit to one of the wards in an Indian hospital. On a bed, in a corner of the room, lay a dying soldier. Stepping gently up to him, he knelt at his bedside, and whispered into his ear, "My dear brother, are you afraid to die?" Looking up with a smile, the dying man answered, "Oh, no, sir; I have died already!" He meant that Jesus, his substitute, had died for him, and he had not to die, but only to fall asleep in Jesus₂.

"By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; ²⁰Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." (1 Peter 3:19-20) While confined to His Sabbath rest in the Garden Tomb, our Lord preached to those spirits in Hell through the agency of His own divine Spirit. Our Creed tells us that He was Crucified, but it does not say that His life was taken at the hand of any man. ***"He was crucified, dead and buried."*** It also states that ***"On the third Day, He arose from the dead."*** (Apostles Creed₃; See 1 Corinthians 15:4) It does not say that He was 'raised from the dead.' There are fine distinctions in the wording. His human form died by His own consent to free us of our sins. His lifeless human form was raised by His own Spirit.

20

tual power on the third day. It is impossible for God to die. His Spirit could not die though His human form did. It was this Spirit of Christ, I believe, that preached to those languishing dead in Hell of the pre-Deluge days. This seems to me to be the justice of God since those of the pre-Flood world had not received the promise made to Abraham.

It is interesting to observe that the very elements that destroyed the wicked of those days of Noah were also the very same elements that saved Noah and His family: “. . . *eight souls were saved by water.*” (1 Peter 3:20) The greater the waters of the destroying flood, the higher were the occupants of the Ark raised above the destruction below. Here again we have the confirmation of the efficacy of the Sacrament of Baptism as being “an outward and visible form of an inward and spiritual grace.⁴” (See 2 Corinthians 4:16) “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: ²²Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.*” (1 Peter 3:21-22) It is by no means the water itself that saves, but the washen soul illustrated thereby in the heart that belongs to God. Obviously, since Christ arose in bodily form, and sits at the right hand of the Father, He is not subject to being arraigned at every Roman Mass to be physically present in the elements of Bread and Wine; though He is forever spiritually therein among true worshippers at Communion.



Hallelujah for the Cross

“But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Galatians 6:14)

This hymn is composed by one of my favorite ministers of the Gospel, Horatius Bonar (19 December 1808 – 31 July 1889), a minister of the Church of Scotland and, later, the Free Church of Scotland which he joined in 1843 after graduating Edinburgh. Though he is most remembered for his hymns, he was also a great expository preacher of the Word. I have learned much from reading his sermon material.

This hymn was titled, *Crown of Life*, when released in 1875. Later in 1882, James McGranahan wrote the present musical score.

Hallelujah is the word that best describes our perception of Christ's work on the Cross. It comes from two Hebrew words: *Hallel* - meaning praise to many; and *Jah* (or *Yah*) meaning God.

HALLELUJAH FOR THE CROSS

The cross, it standeth fast -
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Defying every blast -
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
The winds of hell have blown,
The world its hate hath shown,
Yet it is not overthrown -
Hallelujah for the cross!

Refrain
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah for the cross;
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
It shall never suffer loss!

It is the old cross still -
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Its triumph let us tell -
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
The grace of God here shone
Thru Christ, the blessed Son,
Who did for sin atone -
Hallelujah for the cross!

Refrain

'Twas here the debt was paid -
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
Our sins on Jesus laid -
Hallelujah, hallelujah!
So round the cross we sing
Of Christ, our offering,
Of Christ, our living king -
Hallelujah for the cross!

Refrain

“The cross, it standeth fast - Hallelujah, hallelujah! Defying every blast - Hallelujah, hallelujah! The winds of hell have blown, The world its hate hath shown, Yet it is not overthrown - Hallelujah for the cross!” The Cross of Christ is Immovable in Time and Cause. It did, as we have said many times, divide Eternity precisely in two. Nothing else could have done so. So momentous was the event of the Crucifixion that it stands at mid-point - not only of Time, but also of the Mysteries of God and His Word. No amount of slander or deceit can unravel the meaning of that event. Men seek tirelessly to obscure the name of Christ from every religious holiday (read Holy-Day) to no avail. Christmas has become Winter Break. Easter has become Spring Break, and Thanksgiving has been labeled ‘Turkey Day’ or Fall Break. Such animosity toward Christ cannot be disguised as expediency or utilitarian. No one can deny the witness of our calendar which tells us that something so very spectacular occurred 2,020 years ago

that we date our calendars to that reference point. Some years ago, the Jehovah Witnesses, who deny the divinity of Christ, conceived of a manner to hide the profundity of His Birth. Instead of labeling the year as Anno Domini (In the Year of our Lord) - A.D. - they began using the spurious term "Common Era or C.E." Atheistic scientists and secular publishers were eager to take up this term as well⁵. But that does not remove the evidence that something very special happened 2,020 years ago that was so profound as to date our calendar by the date whether we adhere to the correct A.D. or the spurious C.E. *"Let God be true but every man a liar!"* (Romans 3:4)

"It is the old cross still - Hallelujah, hallelujah! Its triumph let us tell - Hallelujah, hallelujah! The grace of God here shone Thru Christ, the blessed Son, Who did for sin atone - Hallelujah for the cross!" The shadow of the cross was given Abraham on Mount Moriah when he anticipated the sacrifice of His only begotten son, Isaac; however, God taught us thereby that He would not demand the redemptive wage of sin be paid by any man - nor could he - but that God would provide Himself a Lamb for the sacrifice. (See Genesis 22:1-19) The Cross has, since Abraham until now, been the steadfast Ensign of the Christian religion. The Cross was not only the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also of the Father who endured the pitiful ordeal of seeing His only Begotten Son so mercilessly treated by sinful men - the very ones for whom He bled and died! It was not an act of justice, but of grace alone toward us. It was justice in the eyes of God that someone must pay the wages of sin under the terms of the Immutable Law of God. This, Christ did, and was the only One worthy of doing so. It was an act of Justice married to Mercy and Grace. The atonement makes us One with God if we have believed fully, (At-One-Ment.)

"'Twas here the debt was paid - Hallelujah, hallelujah!"

Our sins on Jesus laid - Hallelujah, Hallelujah! So round the cross we sing Of Christ, our offering, Of Christ, our living king -Hallelujah for the cross!" The sacrifice was made once and for all. *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"* (1 Peter 3:18) We can pay no offering to God that will benefit Him for all belongs to Him - even every hair of our heads. So Praise is our only offering of worth. Unlike the disciples of that dreaded day who feared to come near the cross, we gather now in confident courage since the price is paid, the victory won, and the danger past. There has never been a time when Christ was not living. His Spirit lived on as His body lay lifeless in the Garden Tomb. He is the Living King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Though crude, ugly, and tortuous, we praise God for the Cross, remembering that we, too, have a cross to bear - not of gold or silver, but of like crude wood and splinters.

REFRAIN: *"Hallelujah, hallelujah, Hallelujah for the cross; Hallelujah, hallelujah, It shall never suffer loss!"* No, the Cross cannot suffer loss because it was an act of Eternal import. At the cross, the victory was won over the disdainful Adversary. Once unconditional victory has been won, there is no recourse to that victory of Christ at Calvary. Neither can we suffer loss. We live our lives in constant struggle and growing infirmities. But the end is to capitalize on that victory won for us by our Lord - a newness of life, heart, mind and glorified body with Him. This is just cause for the Hallelujah chorus in three parts - Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah. - to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

(1 Corinthians 3:15)

Same Mind of Christ

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; ²That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. ³For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: ⁴Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you: ⁵Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. ⁶For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Peter 4:1-6)

At the outset of this chapter, perhaps it will be profitable to consider with what Mind we should view all things both heavenly and spiritually.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5) “For who hath known the mind of the lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 2:16) “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2) “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.” (1 John 2:6)

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” (1Peter 4:1) We are not our own, but we belong to God. If we have “done it **our** way” that way leads to the depths of despair and hell. There is only one right Way,

and that is the Way, the Truth and the Life which is Jesus Christ. "As a general rule, if taken at its basic meaning: The men who suffer generally reflects on their life and ways, are humbled, loathe themselves because of their past iniquities, and ceases from them; for, in a state of suffering, the mind loses its desire for the sins of the flesh, because they are embittered to them through the apprehension which they have of death and and judgment; and, on their application to God's mercy, they are delivered from their sin.⁶" The greater meaning seems to me to be: "Those who have firmly resolved, if called to it, to suffer death rather than apostatize from Christianity, have consequently ceased from, or are delivered from, the sin of saving their lives at the expense of their faith.⁷"

If we have been faithful to God's Word, we will not escape hardship and suffering as a result. We will be ostracized from common society and labeled as radicals or hermits. But walking in the Mind of Christ places us on that straight and Narrow Way that leads up to Heaven.

The salient point of today's text is singular: **Walk in the Way of the Lord.**

THE COMMAND TO DO SO:

The first verse combines with the second and is our commandment: "*Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;*²*That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*" (1 Peter 4: 1-2)

One major difference in the NATO command structure and that of the old Soviet regime was this: In the NATO forces, there was, and remains, a structure of command that descended from the most senior officers to the lowest private. If a leader were attrited, the next in seniority took comm-

and, all the way down to the last man. The Soviet forces had no such command structure for attrition. When the leader fell, there was a dilemma. With God as our Commander, we have no such problem of either example. We have only Him to follow. If we abide by our 'marching orders' we are all marching with the same purpose, intent, and perseverance the **Mind of Christ!**

THE REASON FOR OUR DILEMMA BEFORE COMING TO CHRIST:

The American soldier of time past would die in battle bravely for his country, but he needed to be told a reason for his sacrifice. If he knew the **why**, the **how** was a matter of ingenuity and courage. The sinner tries to solve the question of **how** before he examines the **why**. What sense does it make to drown our sorrows in drugs, alcohol, and promiscuous and/or sensual pursuits when the end is death? Let us settle the **why** and the **how** as it will be no challenge. *"For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries."* (1 Peter 4:3) When we operate under someone else's plan of action, we are not thinking for ourselves; but when we have put on the Mind of Christ, we think, act, and live with that Mind. Our thoughts that are His thoughts become naturally our own. We have no vision or opinion when we are One with Christ, and there will be no division and contention in our churches either when the Mind of Christ rules for His Mind is indivisible.

THE RESULT:

"Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:⁵ Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead. ⁶For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." (1 Pe-

ter 4:4-6) The people of God are considered ‘peculiar’ by the world. *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”* (1 Peter 2:9) The world marches to its own drummer, and believes that the whole creation is out of step when it is them who are missing the beat of the True Drummer. For doing God and living according to righteousness, we are blamed for doing evil by the world. Why, do they not truly understand? No, they do truly understand, but if they admit to a God who is just, they are faced with the dilemma of repenting of their sins and allowing the Holy Ghost to amend their lifestyles. This, they cannot abide. None will be left without excuse. Those who lived in the days of Noah, before the Gospel of the Promise of Abraham was preached, have had the Gospel preached to them in prison by Christ. They cannot admit to having no preacher to warn them. Being in the spirit in that prison, they were given volition to live in the same Spirit of Christ while having died in the flesh.

How about you, dear Reader, are you dead in trespasses and sin, or alive in Christ having died **to** those trespasses and sins?



The End of All Things

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. ⁸And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. ⁹Use hospitality one to another without grudging. ¹⁰As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 4:7-11)

As the righteous converge on the Banks of Jordan Waters, the mighty Shore Batteries₈ of God will level their barrels from the far side on the enemy behind and lay down a judgment of fire and devastation on those unholy minions of Satan who pursue. The first pursuing army of Pharaoh was destroyed by water at the Red Sea crossing - the second shall be destroyed by the “*consuming Fire of God*” (See Hebrews 12:29) at the Banks of Jordan. Of course, my reference to those Banks is figurative of the passing of the righteous into glory, and the terrific consummation by fire of the wicked and its worldly platform.

So, what are the profound truths that God reveals in the text today, and of what meaning shall we make of it?

I. THE SOLEMN TRUTH HERE ANNOUNCED.

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” (1 Peter 4:7) The end of what things?

1) The end of your earthly engagements is at hand. The Open Door made available by our Lord Jesus Christ will remain open as long as the full complement of invited guests have arrived for the Marriage Feast. Once the last

qualified and invited guest arrives, the Door will be shut and those who are not worthy by faith and grace will be excluded. There will be no recourse for those late comers when the end comes finally.

2) The end of your worldly enjoyments is at hand. The illicit desires of youth and even old age will have come to an end. I once heard an old New Orleans preacher tell the story of old Joe Larosa who lived a decadent life of drinking, gambling, adultery, and a seamy life of sin and indifference to God. One day, old Joe breathed his last breath and fell into the arms of the Angel of Death. The hearse, on the way to the grave, passed by Old Joe's favorite drinking hole, but Old Joe paid no mind at all - he was indifferent to it. It passed by the house of prostitution that Old Joe frequented, but Old Joe was completely indifferent to that sordid establishment. It passed by the gambling casino and tobacco store that Old Joe loved in his heyday, but Old Joe paid no mind at all to that former choice establishment of his. He was indifferent to all of those sinful pursuits that once bore such an appeal to Old Joe. Old Joe was indifferent to those worldly sins in death because he was indifferent to God in life. The Door had closed for Old Joe!

3) The end of trial and sorrow to the godly is at hand. Let us suppose that the aging old minister that once had appealed to Old Joe's conscience to turn from his wicked ways passed from this life the same day of Old Joe's demise. How different was the last breath of both? Old Joe knew that the end of all things had come for him. In abject sorrow and despondency, he breathed that last breath and was buried. But the old minister simply closed his eyes in a much-deserved sleep and opened them to the smiling face of his Lord. Which outcome would you prefer, friend? Love will be the seal of righteousness if none can offer a perfect righteousness - a love sealed in Christ. *“And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.”*⁹ *Use hospitality one to*

another without grudging.” (1 Peter 4:8-9)

4) The end of our privileges and opportunities is at hand. Believe me, there are no privileges in Hell! There is no hope of amendment in Hell. All of the occupants are thieves, liars, hypocrites, abusers of themselves with men, perverts and sodomizers of little children, and sorcerers (druggies). No privileges or opportunities are necessary on the blissful far shores of Jordan Banks. There will be no want, but only joyful fellowship and love. *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”* (1 Peter 4:10)

5) The end of our probation is at hand. It is true that every knee shall bow at the mighty appearance of the Armies of Heaven with the Heavens as their line of battle. The wicked and evil of the world will acknowledge Him as Lord in sheer fear and dread anticipation of that fiery judgment to come upon them.

In view of these great things coming upon the world, how shall the righteous deport themselves? *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”* (1 Peter 4:11)

II. THE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS FOUNDED ON THIS TRUTH.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

1) Be sober. If the first thought that comes to your mind is that we must be sober from alcohol, you need to elevate your thinking above this consideration only. Though being free of the debilitating and mind-altering use of much alcohol is certainly meant here, much more is also addressed.

The second definition of ‘sober’ is “marked by sedate or gravely or earnestly thoughtful character or demeanor.”⁹ We must be serious and solemn concerning our responsibilities to both God and our fellows. We cannot be serious about our faith if we are not serious and sober Bible scholars. We must feed from the Bread of Life Daily (God’s Word) or else be malnourished Christians.

2) Be watchful. We are each watchmen and watchwomen on the wall. Because we know God’s country, we recognize the approach of the enemy on the distant horizon in time to warn those within the walls of the coming danger. Though we may be as a Voice Crying in the Wilderness, it is important to expound truth. In that way, the blood of the silent will not be on our heads. The story is told of the Duke of Wellington just before the decisive Battle of Waterloo. Seeing an officer slouching with his uniform in disarray, the Duke asked, “Why do you stand in such an unmilitary and unbecoming posture?” to which the officer replied, “I’m off duty, sir.” Then the Duke bellowed, “A British officer is never off duty. Resume your military bearing!” Neither is the Christian ever “off duty.” We must watch **always** for a watchman caught sleeping on duty is deserving of facing the firing squad. *“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”* (Luke 21:36)

3) Be prayerful. Three principles for a military unit on the battlefield are **move**, **shoot**, and **communicate**! We, as soldiers of Christ, must **go** (move) into all the world and teach (shoot) the Gospel to all comers. But we must also **communicate** with each other (worshipful fellowship) and to the Field Commander to whom we answer (Jesus Christ). That **communication** occurs by way of prayer. The field lines must be open in **both** directions. Prayer is not intended to serve as a conduit whereby we communicate our needs and wants to God, but is more importantly intended

to serve as an avenue whereby we gain His will for us - accepting that will as the perfect solution to our appeal.

The Grave Duty of Ministers:

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” (1 Peter 4:11) How many times have you heard a minister boast of how many souls he has brought to the Lord? How many have boasted of the massive churches they have built, or the great numbers that have been brought by them into the church? So did the Holy Ghost, bearing the Sword of the Word, have no part in this success, or was it solely attributable to the efforts of human will? If so, those souls are still lost, and that minister better find some fire-retardant garments quickly! All of our preaching and sharing must be done according to the oracles of God, and with every ounce of our ability and talents with which the Lord has endowed us. The end of all must be for the glorification of God. For this reason, the Anglican pulpit is positioned - not at the center of the church sanctuary - but to the right side (Gospel side) facing out; because it is His Word (Gospel) being preached, and it is the Lord Jesus Christ - not man - who is the central focus of our worship. *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matthew 18:20)





Casting All Your Care on Him

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: ²Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; ³Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. ⁵Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. ⁶Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: ⁷Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:1-7)

God's Word posits a strong exhortation to the ministers of His Church to *“Feed the flock of God which is among you.”* (1 Peter 5:2a) From the first, the minister, especially, since he is the one who most needs the reminder, must know that the flock is by no means the minister's, but they belong to God alone! Unfortunately, we might get the opposite impression in observing the iconic popularity that many modern ministers promote for themselves in the large and spiritually devoid churches of America. The minister, I remind you (and myself), is a servant before he is a leader of souls to Christ. This is the most commonly neglected truth in all ministries of the church.

I have urged many friends, and even relatives, to read the Word of God and see if the truth does not burst forth in commanding light on some issue; but I am often told: “Well, I must admit that the Bible clearly says what you claim, but my minister has a different opinion, and I must go along with him.” Is this not amazing for its lack of common sense, and isn't it evidence of lack of faith and trust in God's Word? I firmly believe that many ministers of our

day have Paul's counsel in verse two above completely reversed.

They misconstrue the command to be "*feed **on** the flock of God*" rather than "*feed the flock of God.*" They have, either wittingly or unwittingly, become wolves in sheep's clothing. This is literally so, for the sheep's apparel that they wear is skinned from the helpless sheep themselves.

In order to advise and counsel others, a man must have walked the road that he advocates for others. Paul did this. Though it is scriptural for the church to assist the living of ministers whose greater time is devoted to service, it should be done so through limited stipends and not some lucrative salary. Paul was a tent-maker in order to spare the church of providing his living. How many Paul's do we have in the ministry today? We do, thankfully, have some; but not nearly so many as the other sort that live deliciously on the back of poor parishioners.

" . . . taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly;" (1 Peter 5:2) The call to the ministry **must** come from God and not man. Regardless of how strongly we feel that a promising brother should become a minister, our opinions and encouragements have no bearing on his legitimate calling in God. If as man's carnal will has been surrendered for that perfect Will of God, he will know the Voice of God calling him to the ministry when the call is sounded. That satisfies the first two requirements of a man being called to the ministry.

- 1) The call must originate in God;
- 2) the man must **know** that God has called him; and
- 3) the Church must recognize that calling upon the life of the man being called.

There are no 'born' preachers, and none receive a calling by right of inheritance or personal volition.

" . . . not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;" (1 Peter 5:2) The term used here, filthy lucre, is a reprehensible motive

in the mind of God. Lucre most often means, money. Filthy lucre means an inordinate desire for money at any moral cost – a tendency observed in many clergy today. It is not different than the kind of desire for wealth that a prostitute may exhibit. Rather than asking first what salary and benefits may be offered, the called minister should ask, “Where, Lord; and who?” Not “How much and how little?” There are too many pastors who kill and feed on the sheep for their wool. There are too many who preach their own mind and opinions rather than the Word of God. Ezekiel warned Israel of old about such despicable men: “*And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, ²Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; ³Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing.*” (Ezekiel 13:1-3) False dreams and false visions are being openly preached today from many of America’s pulpits. “*They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.*” (Ezekiel 13:6)

Please heed the warning to false shepherds: “. . . *Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? ³Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. ⁴The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. ⁵And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. ⁶My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was*

38

scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. ⁷Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; ⁸As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; ⁹Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; ¹⁰Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.” (Ezekiel 34:2 - 10)

“Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:3) The pastors or clergy are not kings deserving of special privilege other than the honor due one who labors selflessly for the Lord’s people, or a faithful old servant of mature years who has labored all of his life for a family. He is a servant! He is not a dictator, either. If he is a sound minister of the Word, and his love is profoundly obvious, the people will trust his leading as a true under-shepherd and will follow him out of love and not compulsion. His life should be a high standard of purity and moral clarity and not a hint of moral turpitude. “Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord GOD. ⁹And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel.” (Ezekiel 13:8-9e)

I once read that a great sea-going liner was bearing down on New York Harbor from Africa. Among the exhaustive passenger manifest, there were three important passengers on board – two of whom were more important by far than

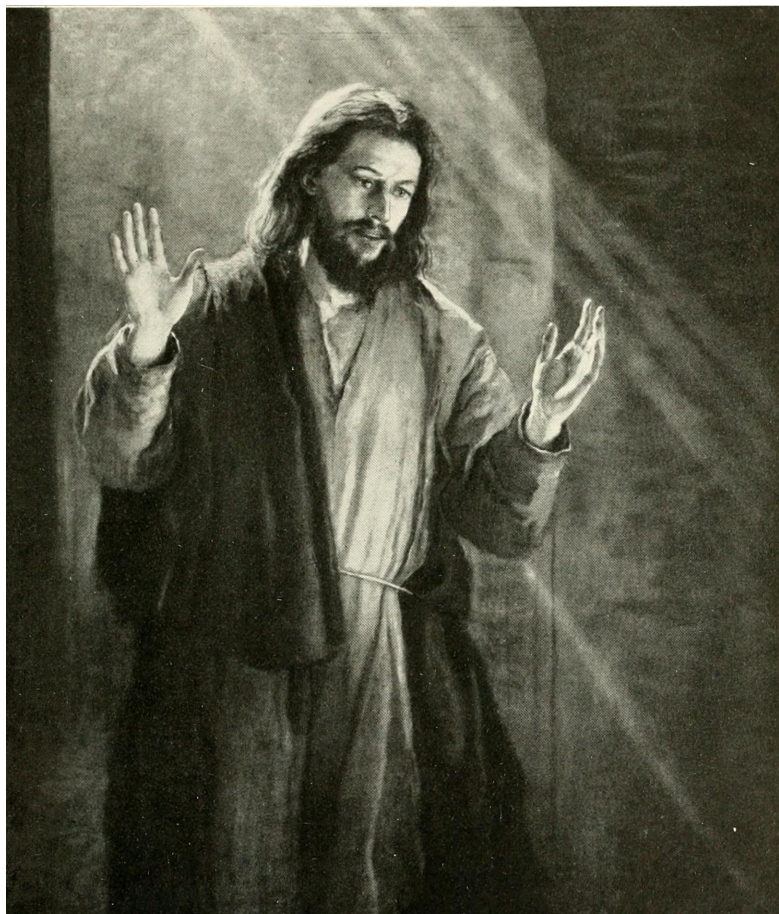
the third. These two very important people were aged and bent with years of labor, deprivation, and service as missionaries in the heartland of Africa's Ivory Coast. Their work came to an end because they had exhausted their health in working to save souls. When the great vessel came to anchorage at port side, the passengers were greeted by hordes of welcoming fans and followers. The old missionary couple walked through these crowds unnoticed; yet the third person of the three was Teddy Roosevelt, returning from safari in Kenya.

The crowds were there for him. Teddy Roosevelt may have been a good man, but did he ever accomplish anything compared with this poor missionary couple? There was One, however, who walked with this couple from the ship – our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.”* (1 Peter 5:4) I am sure that the crown of glory by now has been awarded.

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5) I have an abiding love and fondness for Asian people. One reason is perhaps because they honor their elders out of a cultural heritage in the way that we once did in America out of moral compunction. All pride is directed toward worldly considerations. No true Christian is **proud** of his own righteousness. He can boast of nothing because he is well aware that all that is good in his heart is the work of the Lord and not his own.

The whole remedy to any disconcerting points you may have gleaned from today's text are answered in the last two verses: *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:”* ⁷*Casting*

all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:6-7) Some people treat love as if it were an exhaustible commodity, but it is not. The more we love, the greater is the treasure and wealth of love in our Fountain. Humility is the same. By lifting others up and putting ourselves down, God mysteriously lifts us above all. We have no need for anxiety or apprehensiveness. He is able to lift our unbecoming yoke, and demonstrate His love for us in ways the world can never comprehend. Have you felt that love, friend?







The Two Lions

“For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. ¹⁵I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.” (Hosea 5:14-15)

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: ⁹Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. ¹⁰But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. ¹¹To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. ¹²By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. ¹³The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. ¹⁴Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.” (1 Peter 5:8-14)

For all of the wonderful works that God has made, Satan has a counterfeit. There were two Trees in the Garden at Eden; two ways of life (the Narrow Way that leads up to Heaven, and the crowded and Broad Way that leads to destruction); two kinds of prophets (false and true); there are two kinds of angels - holy Angels of God and the fallen Angels of Lucifer; and two kinds who follow the Shepherd to pasture (innocent lambs and ravening wolves). There are two lions as well - the roaring lion that is Satan, and the Lion of Judah which brings judgment to the wicked and mercy to the forgiven. “. . . Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to

open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” (Revelation 5:5) It is that “*roaring lion that walketh about seeking whom he may devour*” that is the focus of the first two verses of our text today (1 Peter 5:8-9). This lion has wounded the heel of the Lamb of God, but the Lamb has finally and unconditionally crushed the lion's (serpent's) head and defeated that old Serpent.

Most hunters experienced in the African safari know that a wounded lion is twice more dangerous than those who have not been wounded by man. It is true as well that Satan, as a fallen angel cast down in his rebellion from Heaven, is also deadly and dangerous to the unsuspecting soul that has not come to place his trust in that mighty Lion (the Lord Jesus Christ) who was the one to cast Lucifer down in primitive eternity past. He licks his wounds and seeks to mar or destroy all that God has created, but especially the crowning pride of His Creation - Man! The scourge of disease, parasites, and thorns are the mutating works of Satan by way of the sin that he introduced to our federal parents - Adam and Eve. He can be both passive and aggressive depending on the vulnerabilities of his prey.

THE ROARING LION: “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*” (1 Peter 5:8) A prepared defense is always more effective than a simple disregard for contingent dangers. Belshazzar and the inhabitants of Babylon were having a riotous drinking party when the walls of the city were breached and the city was taken. Sobriety is a wise demeanor for all good men and women in all circumstances. Sobriety in worship has nearly disappeared in our churches. Many would believe that a drunken orgy were apace if they stepped into many of our charismatic churches. Watchfulness is also essential. The devil's footsteps can be heard always just beyond the doors of the church. He is not only a stealthy serpent who creeps

and slithers out of the sight of the prey, but also a roaring lion whose ferocity is without the burden of mercy. Just as he stealthily deceived our first parents in the Garden, his approaches have similar effect on the greater majority of the human race. If cunning and stealth will not work, he will resort to outright persecution and character assassination of the righteous. The author of the text today was well aware of the need for vigilance for he fell asleep thrice in Gethsemane while the Lord was in His greatest distress.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LION:

1) He is subtle. Even the pet cat has patience and cunning in slowly sneaking upon a bird on the lawn. He will wait indefinitely for the right moment to attack. The lion is no different for he is a member of the feline family. The wicked are his cubs: *“He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. ¹⁰He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.”* (Psalm 10:9-10)

2) The lion, as is Satan, is wide-ranging in his hunt. He may leave for a time when he realizes his presence has been noticed and return later to devour the weak of the herd. His lair is in the covert of the rocks, and he makes the entrance there seem free of danger; but please note that there are a variety of footsteps going into the lair, and non coming out! *“And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.”* ((Job 1:7)

3) The lion does most of his hunting in darkness for his eyes are suited with an enhanced night-vision. Those men who love to carouse under the cover of darkness have made themselves very susceptible to the untimely attack of the lion.

4) The lion and his namesake, Satan, is persevering. He takes no vacations, and all hours of the day are his venue.

“ . . . Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our bretheren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.” (Revelation 12:10)

5) The lion and Satan are diligent in their pursuit of souls. He knows his time is fleeting and must act with immediate dispatch to accomplish his greatest evil. *“ . . . Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”* (Revelation 12:12)

6) The lion is merciless to his prey. He cares not the grievous pain his teeth and claws inflict, and may even enjoy playing with his helpless prey. He may bring a young deer to his little ones (demons) and teaches them, too, to treat the innocent baby with impunity. The savage animal kills to satisfy the calls of nature; but our adversary reaps no benefit from the destruction of men. His exertions serve only to increase his own guilt and misery; yet is he insatiable in his thirst for our condemnation.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DEFENSE:

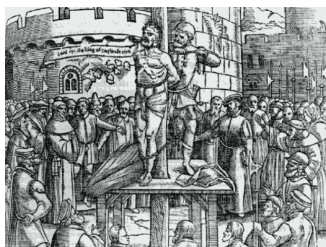
“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” (1 Peter 5:9) God has provided us with a wide arsenal of weapons with which to confront this merciless enemy. We have mentioned sobriety, vigilance and faith. But the accomplished biblical scholar will be emboldened, too, with a knowledge of God's Word that will be devastating to Satan and render him helpless before the Light of Christ. *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* (Ephesians 6:11) *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.”* (Hosea 4:6)

Resistance to Satan may not always stop his terror to the

Elect, but it will limit that terror to the flesh only while preserving the soul. *“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. ¹¹To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”* (1 Peter 5: 10-11) The Church is enriched by the blood and tears of the saints. The Reformers suffered burning at the stake rather than deny God's Word. Suffering purifies the soul of the saint and perfects his testimony. It is to the glory of God alone that any can withstand the Devil and his charms and terrors.

“By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. ¹³The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.” (1 Peter 5:12-13) Sylvanus (Silas) was a fellow servant of Paul who preached the Gospel confirmed here by Peter. Peter is writing from Babylon (not the seat of the great heresy that sits on the seven hills of Rome as some presumed to suggest). It is interesting to note that Peter could not have been a Roman priest today because he was married with family; Marcus, however, was a son by fellowship and not of blood.

The benediction is beautifully expressive of the change made by Christ from that of a rough fisherman to an Apostle of the Church of Christ. *“Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.”* (1 Peter 5:14)





The Way, the Truth, and the Life

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” ²In 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. ³And 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. ⁴And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. ⁵Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? ⁶Jesus saith unto him, ***I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*** ⁷***If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*** ⁸Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. ⁹Jesus saith unto him, ***Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*** ¹⁰Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. ¹²Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. ¹³And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴***If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.***” (John 14:1-14)

There are two stellar and remarkable truths mentioned by our Lord Jesus in this text today - ***“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,”*** and, ***“No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”*** These two profound statements come in a single verse - John 14:6.

The occasion is the moment that Jesus is preparing to bid farewell to His disciples ere His Passion. ***“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”*** ²***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. ³ 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. ⁴ And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” (John 14:1-4) Our Lord says that He is going so that He might prepare a place for us. What does this mean? An old Jewish wedding tradition requires a prospective groom to meet with the family of the bride which his father has found through much searching and enquiry. The two meet with the two families. There will be a cup of wine on the table between them. After much conversation, if the boy desires to be wed to the young woman, he will reach for the cup of wine and drink from it. If the young lady is in agreement to the marriage betrothal, she, too, will then drink from that **same cup** as we do in Holy Communion, (since the Church is betrothed to Christ.)

The Church is the betrothed Bride of Christ. We drink from the same cup of sacrifice from which He drank. That seals the betrothal. The bridegroom will then depart with his family to their home where he, under the supervision of his father, prepares a place for the bride. After perhaps a year or more of labor, the father will declare the living quarters suitable for the bride. The son then goes, in the company of his groomsmen, to the young ladies house (without prior notice) to take his bride. One of the groomsmen will either make a loud shout that the “*Bridegroom cometh!*” or else sound a trumpet near the girl’s house. She must be always ready to be taken - just like the Church. “*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:*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) (See also 1 Corinthians 15:52)

In spite of His steady and repeated teachings of who He was, the disciples seemed to have been asleep to all learning for the past three years. (See John 14:5, 7-9) We are all

that way. However, though we may not be aware, we are still learning. As we see God's plan coming together, the Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance those things which God has spoken in His Word which we did not believe we retained so well.

Jesus responds to the questions of Thomas concerning the way of Christ' going, and to Philip's request to be shown the Father, by pointing out that He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The fullness of the Godhead is fully comprehended in Christ! Let us examine those three points Jesus expounded:

I. I AM THE WAY:

The way of our Lord is not a broad field open to every creature and beast. He is a **Door** to an enclosed fold that is protected and into which not all can come unless they know Christ as Lord and Savior. *"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."* (John 10:9) His way is not the gloomy and winding marshlands of the sinner, but a **High Way**, and a **Straight Way**. *"Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* (Matthew 7:14) Most prefer the broad highway lit with the false lights of the world. It is a declining way and easy to travel. Its end is destruction. But the Way of Christ is Narrow. That does not pose a problem since few travel that Way.

All who know Christ, know the Father, because the Son and the Father are One with the Holy Ghost. But the comparison does not end there. If we are One with Christ, we, too, will be One with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. Those who know the true followers of Christ will be led to know Christ and His Father through our lives. *"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him."* ⁸*Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth*

us. ⁹Jesus saith unto him, *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?* ¹⁰*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.* ¹¹*Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.*" (John 14:7-11) "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18) Being One with Christ, have we, too, declared Him.

We are now privileged to enter the Holiest place face-to-face with the Father by our High Priest which is Christ. We are sprinkled by the blood of the sacrificial altar which gained our entrance into that Holy Tabernacle. And the Laver of God's Word, standing just before the Holy Place, is our place of washing in coming before the Almighty. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; ²¹And having an high priest over the house of God; ²²Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Christ has become our High Priest and Advocate before the Father - not St. Peter or Paul; not some Roman pontiff or tin-horned magistrate; not the beloved Mary; but Christ **Alone!** No priest can intercede for us - it has always been the privilege of the High Priest which is Christ. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) ". . . And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 2:1)

Christ alone is the only One who could provide the Way to the Father - not Buddha, not Mohammad, not Ishtar - but only Christ. But not only is He the Way to the Father, but He is also:

II. THE TRUTH:

Truth is not subject to debate. Can you imagine a panel of learned scholars gathered for the purpose to question whether or not the earth is flat? But the Truth of God shines as bright and blinding Sun in the Heavens which no man can deny. When he asked, "What is Truth?" Pontius Pilate had not thought through the question. (See John 18:38) Truth is absolute! Our knowledge of what truth is may change, but never the truth itself.

What are the benefits of truth? Truth is a liberator from the darkness of ignorance and blind chance. "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32) The Light of the sun reveals the true and safe path we travel. Abject darkness leads to ruin. ". . . *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*"³⁵ *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.*"³⁶ *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*" (John 8:34-36) The Truth of Christ is the only means by which we may be washed clean of our sins and given a life of joy and liberty. He is the **Life:**

III. THE LIFE:

Christ is our Good Shepherd. He has proved this by laying down His life for the sheep. (See John 10:11) His peace exceeds all that the world can offer. (See John 14:27; 16:33) His love for us surpasses all knowledge. "*And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*" (Ephesians 3:19) The joy of His love is beyond expressing: "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*" (John 15:11)

An Abundant Life in Christ is a super-natural life. No creature that God has made is capable of being ‘born again’ except man! “. . . *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (John 3:3) “. . . *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*” (John 3:5-6) It is a fact that we must first be born into this world to have the privilege to be born into Heaven. This comprehends the tiny fetus conceived in the womb and murdered before it can know sin, or see the light of day. This spiritual re-birth opens the flood-gates of Living Waters to our parched souls: “. . . *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. ³⁸He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*” (John 7:37-38)

CONCLUSION:

We can only know the Way, the Truth, and the Life by knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, for His is truly the Way, the Truth, and the Life. **No one** comes to the Father but by Him - notwithstanding the heresies of the Roman cult. Knowing the truth sets us free from the nagging guilt of sin. The blessings of the abundant Life in Christ is one which lasts forever.

The Way, the Truth, and the Life is of no benefit unless His Way, His Truth, and His Life becomes your own through the benefits of the Cross that He suffered. “. . . *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” (Mark 16:15-16)



Keeper of Souls

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Peter 1:3-5)

THE PRISON OF THE WORLD AND SIN:

We are all kept either in the **Prison** of the **World**, or by the **Fortress** of the **God** of Heaven. The world disguises its prison as a fortress, but its chains are made of sin, and its destination is Hell. The Prison of the World resembles a fortress in many, but not all, points:

- 1) It is a strong and secure establishment;
- 2) The walls are high and insurmountable;
- 3) There is a Warden who is the keeper of the occupants (Satan);
- 4) No one enters freely unless they are bound in chains;
- 5) No one escapes unless they have paid the penalty for sin (death);
- 6) The occupants are treated without love;
- 7) It is a place of hopelessness unless the government is changed, or a pardon is proclaimed.
- 8) It is designed to keep the prisoner in, not the world out.

All who are confined in the Prison of the World deserve to be there. They are all sinners by nature and by choice; and they have chosen this prison for their own habitation. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”* (Romans 3:23) *“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6:23) Those who may escape for a time under their own power (self-righteousness) will be arrested and brought again into the prison since every man's righteousness is as filthy rags. It is only by the imputed right-

eousness of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may be justified and considered righteous by Heaven. *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. ⁷And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities."* (Isaiah 64:6-7)

No one in prison has the key to the iron-barred door. No man can free himself who is in the prison of sin. The Governor of Heaven has the key. He will grant pardon to all who will receive it. But there are terms for that grant of grace. The prisoner must evidence a change of heart by repenting of his past sins. He must apply for the pardon, but this is not his own action, but the grace of God drawing him to it. No one in prison loves another prisoner, and is incapable of loving in his natural state. But God, in His wisdom, providence, and foreordination, always draws the one who will respond to that love of God by echoing the same in his heart. *"We love him, because he first loved us."* (1 John 4:19) That magnetic love of God draws the repentant sinner to Himself. Since the sinner is already dead in trespasses and sins, he cannot come to God as a dead man. But that love of God quickens his dead heart and draws him forth from the tomb into the freedom of Light and Grace. So it is only God who is able to grant a pardon to the prisoner and set him free. Not only that, but the criminal record of the prisoner is erased forever.

THE FORTRESS OF GOD:

Once we are set free from our sins and prison by the grace of God, we must be given sanctuary from the pursuing demons of the world's prison. Where shall we find that Sanctuary City? Is it not the City and Fortress of God? *"The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the*

horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” (Psalm 18:2)

While living on the high desert of old Persia (Iran), I flew often in the environs of the central city of Esfahan (elevation 5,000 ft. plus.) To the east and west of the city were very high mountains. Some peaks of the mountains surrounding the city were very steep and almost vertical reaching a sharp peak several hundred feet above the desert floor. It seemed impossible to have scaled that rocky faced steep, but atop many were watchtowers built upon the rock. They were signal towers to alert the city of approaching enemies. They were, in fact, little fortresses. Many of these were ancient to the days of Cyrus the Great. They have survived all of these centuries because they are situated on a **ROCK** and immune from the enemies’ approach. That is what God is to His Elect.

“Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. ³For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. ⁴Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.” (Psalm 31:2-4)

The Fortress of God is a safe sanctuary, but also a watchtower for the approach of the enemy. Though its walls are impregnable, it serves as a warning to those who are still in the world and its prison. The enemy of our souls is always a prowler for souls to finally destroy them; but those who are yet in prison still have the hope of escape to the Sanctuary City ere Satan takes their lives finally. The Fortress of God can be seen from all directions for it is a City set upon a Hill. Its warning fires can easily be seen by those in prison. “Brightly Beams our Father's Mercy, from His Lighthouse evermore. But to us, He gives the keeping of the Lights along the shore.¹⁰”

THE FORTRESS OF GOD LOOKS MUCH LIKE THE PRISON WITH PROFOUND EXCEPTIONS:

- 1) It is a strong structure made of stone and built upon a stone. Its walls are high.
- 2) Its occupants are there by choice and not compulsion.
- 3) There is a Governor there who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.
- 4) It is impregnable to the enemy, but readily available for admission to the redeemed. *“Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. ³For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. ⁴Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.”* (Psalm 31:2-4)
- 5) The occupants of Heaven's Fortress are protected from the enemy without whereas the prison protects those without from those who are within.
- 6) Our residency and citizenship of the Fortress is eternal. *“Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.”* (Psalm 71:3)
- 7) The Fortress of God is a secret place that the enemy cannot find. *“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”* (Psalm 91:1)
- 8) Not only is the Fortress kept secret from the enemy, its inhabitants are hidden as well from the enemy's arrows. *“Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.”* (Psalm 119:114)
- 9) In a prison, all communications are restricted to the prison; in the Fortress of God, the message goes out to all surrounding horizons of the offer of pardon: *“To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”* (Isaiah 42:7)
- 10) Those in prison are committed for what they are (sinners); but those safely abiding in the Fortress of God are there at the grace of the God by the sacrifice of Another

(Jesus Christ).

11) Amazingly, the offer of pardon is broadly proclaimed to the prisoners, but most prefer to reject it. “. . . *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*”³⁵ *And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.*”³⁶ *If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:34-36)

Though prisoners may be pardoned and freed from the World's Prison by offer of Grace, nothing can penetrate the defenses of the Fortress of God. “. . . *upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*” (Matthew 16:18) To which Rock does this text make reference? Is it to the chip of a stone which was Peter, or was it that Solid Rock that is Christ? “. . . *for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.*” (1 Corinthians 10:4)

Are you drinking of that spiritual Rock that is Christ, or are you chipping the granite stones of your prison? Best to turn your hope over to that Keeper of Souls whose grip never fails and whose purpose is never foiled, and whose offer is of peace, love and joy.





Trees of Righteousness

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; ³To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.” (Isaiah 61:1-3)

Trees are used as metaphors by God to describe both good and evil, but predominately He uses Trees as an example of the righteous person. *“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”* (Psalm 1:3) There are many diverse kinds of trees in God’s green earth, as well as in His Kingdom Paradise. The superbly blessed Christian is just like that tree referenced above that is planted by the Rivers of the Water of Life. But there are other trees cherished by God that are not materially so blessed. The mighty Desert Palm Tree of the deserts of Iran and Arabia flourish in austere circumstances. They are fitted for the dry and wilderness climate where God has planted them. Severe climactic conditions have strengthened them to be among the strongest of trees. They are, by far, the tallest trees of all, but their greater appearance is hidden to the eyes of men for the root system penetrates at great depths into the desert floor in search of nourishing water and minerals. So the root system of the Desert Palm is more than twice the size of what we see exposed above the surface.

There are many Christians who are very much like the Desert Palm. They flourish under austere and harsh conditions

of persecution and want; yet, their greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven goes unobserved by the greater church abroad. Their roots are sunk deep into the hidden rivers of God. I am reminded of devoted Christians of the Levant¹¹ who suffer beheadings, torture and untold miseries in refusing to renounce their Lord and Savior. Such faith puts the average church-goer in America to shame.

There are, too, fruit trees that provide nourishment and refreshment to mankind. They flourish in warm and humid climates for that purpose. Not only is their fruit sweet to the taste, but their blossoms are fragrant to the sense of smell. Many such fruit trees were planted long ago by God, and they are now elderly and stooped; yet, they still bear sweet fruit and make us glad with their company. They are examples to us of God's blessing.

There are also the tall and erect Cedars of Lebanon that remind us of the uncompromising Christian witness who would rather suffer the fires of martyrdom than to submit to a lie. But even the Cedar of Lebanon will grow up crooked if it is not kept straight by its Maker. Children must be trained to grow up straight and tall as the Cedars of Lebanon. If we fail to do that, the knots and twists of sin will mar their growth.

All trees are beneficial to mankind and to animal life as well. Mankind and animals need clean, pure air to breathe. But the air we breathe out is toxic with carbon dioxide. The trees need carbon dioxide which they absorb and emit as oxygen. The whole air of our planet is replenished daily by trees. We build our dwellings with trees, make our furniture from their branches, and heat our home fires with the product of trees. I should mention, too, that trees provide a cool shade in the heat of the summer day. The Christian's testimony and life should reflect that same characteristic of the tree. We take in the poisons of the world and turn them to healthful works. Being, as we are

charged by Christ, the salt of the earth, our life and works lift up all of mankind to the benefits of Christ. We build homes for the homeless and provide fruit for the hungry. When the heat of life is greatly intensified, the Christian provides cooling counsel and shade for the weary and lost.

THE RIGHTEOUS TREES:

1) God's Elect ". . . *shall be called trees of righteousness.*" (Isaiah 61:3)

2) They are the planting of God and not of themselves. ". . . *the planting of the LORD.*" (Isaiah 61:3)

3) The Trees of Righteousness are full of a spiritual life that the world cannot comprehend. "*The trees of the LORD are full of sap.*" (Psalm 104:16) The life-giving sap is the life of the tree.

4) The Trees of Righteousness are forever fruitful and living (they shall never die in old age)! "*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing.*" (Psalm 92:14)

5) Just as the Two Trees of the Garden at Eden, we shall know a tree by its fruits: "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.* ¹⁶*Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?* ¹⁷*Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* ¹⁸*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.* ¹⁹*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* ²⁰*Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*" (Matthew 7:15-20) The fruits of the Tree are the same as those of the Spirit – they do not elevate one believer above another, or cause to speak in confusing and warbled tongues. "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,* ²³*Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*" (Galatians 5:22-23)

6) Just as the fruitful tree sheds its seed upon the earth for

procreating its kind, so does the Christian win souls to Christ by their natural force and testimony. *“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”* (Proverbs 11:30)

7) The Trees of Righteousness are as Cedars of Lebanon: *“The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.”* (Psalm 80:10)

The cedar is noted for its grandeur and nobility. It grows rapidly and lives long. Its wood protects from the moth.

8) Trees of Righteousness are as the Desert Palm. That tree is lofty, fruitful in the desert, and beautiful. It reaches its green leafy arms up to God in the wilderness where no other will do so. *“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. ¹³Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.”* (Psalm 92:12-13)

9) Trees of Righteousness are as the Green Olive Tree: *“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. ¹⁷And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; ¹⁸Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.”* (Romans 11:16-18) What beauty of expression is found in the hidden gems of this comparison.

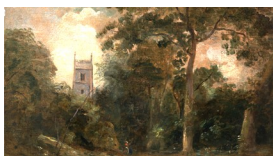
The First Fruit of the Resurrection is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is holy. If we are the branches of that Holy Root, we must also be Holy. *“. . . Be ye holy; for I am Holy.”* (1 Peter 1:16 & Leviticus 11:44) There is only one Son of God by right of blood kinship – the Lord Jesus Christ. He is our root and branch. We are grafted in as the wild olive branch into that Life-Giving Vine. We are sons and daughters by adoption (grafting) and not of the same substance of the Father.

There is yet another example of the Tree of Righteousness.

On the lawn of an old church which I once pastored, stood an ancient oak tree - perhaps as old as the church (two hundred plus years). It spread its branches gloriously over the entire yard of the church, and gave respite from the hot southern Alabama sun. When I enquired of the age of the tree, one of the elderly parishioners said it looked just the same when she was a little girl (seventy years previous). She told me that an old man used to ride his mule-drawn wagon to church each Lord's Day. The old mule he tied to the old Oak Tree.

One Sunday, the old man failed to come to church due to some minor illness; however, the mule did, indeed, come to church and took his familiar place in the shade of the old Oak tree. After service, the men of the church tried to get hold of the mule to take it home, but it would not budge from the shade of the tree. When greater force was used to move the aged mule, it went berserk and the men shot and killed the mule. I consider this a great sorrow, but it happened. Why would the old mule not move from the tree?

I believe he had always found shade and comfort under that old tree from the days of his youth, and now, in his last days, he refused to surrender the comfort of his friend – the old Oak Tree. It was a thing in his life that had never ceased to give him comfort in the heat of the summer, and that old Oak tree never changed or moved. It was worth dying for. Well, there is something worth dying for to us as well. But Christ did the real dying for us, and we must not waver from the shade of that ancient Tree of Life that never moves. If we were worth the dying for by that old Tree of Life, should that Tree not be worth the living by us?





Sufficient Grace

“. . . My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

I believe that there are many Christians today who confute faith for grace. Without the Grace of God, there would be no faith – for faith is a gift of God’s Grace. True belief and faith is a creation in our hearts by the Grace of God and His Holy Spirit working to draw us near. Since grace is a free gift, the disposition of the heart of man cannot act on its own to draw near to God – it must first be drawn there by grace. *“. . . For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.”* (Romans 5:15) The tenth of our Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of the Reformation Church of England bear this biblical truth out in its doctrinal statement: *“The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing (preceding or drawing) us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.”* (1928 Book of Common Prayer)

The great Reformer, Martin Luther, made the grace of God the centerpiece of his work - *“Bondage of the Will”* - as posited by the eighth and ninth verses of the second chapter of Ephesians. (and many other biblical references) *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* (Ephesians 2:8-9) So you believe you did a good deed in coming to the Lord? Without grace drawing you there, you could not have approached.

The subject of Grace is one of the two profound aspects of the Holy Bible along with the Law of God. Without God’s

Moral Law there could be no grace for there would be no sin. And, to the Arminians¹² among us, what is sin but the transgression of God's Law. "*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*" (1 John 3:4) To deny that God's Law is morally binding on the Christian is to deny the grace made available by Christ in redeeming us by means of that very Law.

It would take more than Martin Luther's great book to inform us of all of the aspects of Grace. In fact, it would take sixty-six books that we have in the Holy Bible. This chapter cannot cover but a tiny range in meaning of grace, so we will confine our commentary on the sufficiency of grace to the Christian only.

As a believer in Christ, you should know that the grace of God is always and forever sufficient for you in every condition of life. It is, as well, sufficient at the moment of the sleep of Death that separates the Elect from the Heavenly Paradise of God. Death is an open door to the Elect, and prison bars for the wicked.

HOW IS GRACE SUFFICIENT FOR US?

1) When we are weak and life's challenges seem insurmountable, we have a Friend to whom we can appeal. In the words of that lovely old hymn by the German hymn-writer, Edmund Lorenz, "*Are you weary, are you heavy hearted? Tell it to Jesus, tell it to Jesus. Are you grieving over joys departed? Tell it to Jesus alone.*" Jesus will not always remove the challenges, but He will make us able to overcome them. "*Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.*" ²⁹*He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.*" (Isaiah 40:28-29)

2) Are we tossed about on a sea of cares, lost and without a Star to guide us? We have that Bright and Morning Star to

set our course to. *“For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.”* (Matthew 18:11) If we are lost, Christ has already sent a search for us.

3) Are you sickly and wasting away in illness and misery? *“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: ¹⁵And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. ¹⁶Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (James 5:14-16) Having been drawn to Jesus by just a little knowledge of who He was, the woman taken with an issue of blood was healed by the little spark of faith granted to her by the grace of God. (See Matthew 9:20)

4) Are you desperately poor? There is no greater poverty than that of the soul. *“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”* (Revelation 3:18) That gold tried in the fire is the Word of God. Whoever buys the Word of God by means of the faith granted by grace shall be rich indeed. Not only outwardly rich, but inward so. *“Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.”* (Proverbs 23:23) What is the receipt of our purchase? It is a thorough and continuing study of the Word of God in His Holy Book.

5) Are we blind to the Light of God’s Word? *“. . . anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”* (Revelation 3:18) As we have said before, there are many walking about today who are dead (See Ephesians 2). There are also many who have eyes to see and ears to hear but see and hear not. *“Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?”* (Mark 8:18) (See also

Psalms 115:5, 135:16, & Matthew 13:15) If God has planted that spark of faith in our hearts by grace, our understanding will rise to the knowledge of what God's Word means to us, and our eyes will be opened as surely as those two on the road to Emmaus at the breaking of the bread. (See Matthew 9:30)

6) Do we suffer an inordinate fear over the troubles of life or of our loved ones? Remember Jairus whose little daughter lay dying? *"And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, ²³And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live."* (Mark 5:22-23) But, alas, it seems that Jairus had tarried too long in finding Jesus for as Jesus was speaking, *" . . . there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further?"* (Mark 5:35) But may I kindly remind the reader that it is never too late to seek the mercy and grace of Jesus! The compassionate eyes of our Lord caught the desperate sorrow in the eyes of Jairus. *"As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, **Be not afraid, only believe.**"* (Mark 5:36) We all know the end of that story. The tears of sorrow for Jairus may have been for one night, but joy came in the morning when Jesus spoke to the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus, *" . . . **Talitha cumi;** which is, being interpreted, [**Damsel, I say unto thee, arise**]."* (Mark 5:41)

7) Are you hungry? Our Lord Jesus Christ can feed you with an abundance that exceeds your hunger: *"And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. ¹²When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, **Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.**"* (John

6:11-12) But from which appetite does your hunger arise? From a hunger for things of the world, or of Heaven? He will always provide for our wants (needs) in this life, but a greater provision will He make for our blessings in glory.

8) So your heart is filled with sorrow? He will come to you and turn your tears of sorrow to tears of joy just as He did for Mary Magdalene at the Garden Tomb. (See John 20)

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. ²In 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. ³And 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 14:1-3) *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”* (John 14:18)

9) So the road ahead is marred by the fog of doubt and perplexity? The Lord has equipped us with an amazing array of faculties to guide the ship of our souls in every kind of storm, but the greatest compass we can own is that of a good conscience, duly informed by the Word of God. It is that still, small voice that came to Elijah by the mountain rock. (See 1 Kings 19:12) Please remember that the great stones and floods of life remain to the Christian as to the heathen, but we have that Voice behind quietly whispering to us. *“And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: ²¹And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”* (Isaiah 30:20-21)

We have discussed only a meager portion of the ways in which God's Grace is sufficient unto us. His grace is so very abundant and broad that our ships can never traverse the fullness of that vast Sea of Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; but isn't it a great joy to sail that Sea in faith?



Prayer of the Closet

“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” (Matthew 6:6)

What did our Lord mean when He made the statement above in Matthew? Did He mean that prayers made at other times and in other places are not valid? Not at all! There are two kinds of prayer – private and communal. Our Lord, in His Word and Works, taught us **both**. When He prayed, He often resorted to the seclusion of the mountain height, or the garden solitude, to unburden His soul to His Father in Heaven. Before taking decisions of grave import, He often prayed long, private prayers as: *“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”* (Luke 6:12) This mountain prayer session occurred prior to naming the twelve apostles on the next morning. In this case, the seclusion of the mountain is equivalent to the privacy of the closet. As one climbs nearer the mountain peak, the world below falls away and there is only one view and that is toward Heaven. Our vision can more clearly be focused on things not of this world.

But are all prayers to be made in the closet, or some secluded place? What is the shortest prayer of the Bible? Are all of a private concern? We have examples of the two shortest prayers of the Bible which reflect both a personal, and a general (or communal), prayer. This first prayer was uttered by the disciples in general: *“And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, **Lord, save us: we perish.**”* (Matthew 8:25) The prayer was, **“Lord, Save US!”** The more personal prayer which was uttered out of fear and desperation was that of Peter who had begun to sink in the swirling waters of the Galilean Sea: *“. . . And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to*

go to Jesus. ³⁰*But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, **Lord, save me.***”(Matthew 14:29-30) The first illustrates a communal prayer, the second a personal and private one.

Immediately following our leading text, our Lord demonstrates a few other characteristics of prayer (including a model of communal prayer). *“But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”* (Matthew 6:7-8) The salient point of our Lord’s further qualification of prayer is the principle of sincerity and lack of public and prideful display. How strongly He admonished the Pharisees for their long public prayers to be seen of men: *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.”* (Matthew 23:14) You will search in vain for this verse in its context of your corrupt NIV, ESV and other modern wonders of phony translational deceptions. Perhaps it conflicts too much with the modern theology of ‘name-it-and-claim-it’ gospels, or for fear of the clergy that men might interpret their own greed (of the clergy) for filthy lucre to be represented in that precise verse.

Our Lord then proceeds to illustrate the perfect Communal Prayer – the Lord’s Prayer! It begins with “Our Father” – not **My** Father, or **Your** Father, but **Our** Father. This prayer can be said in worship with relevance to every member of the congregation. It asks for nothing but that the Kingdom of God come to us, God’s will be done both in earth and in Heaven, for our daily bread, for forgiveness of our sins, and for deliverance from evil. Please note the absence of greed in this prayer, and its general application to all of us of faith. What a refreshing thought that all of our prayers

would stipulate that His Will, not ours, be done – for His Will is always a perfect will and one that accords abundantly with the wants of our souls.

This chapter is limited in scope. Men of far greater stature and spiritual nature have written extensive works on prayer that will feed the soul of those seeking a deeper meaning and understanding of prayer. Men such as E. M. Bounds¹³, for example. But we need reminding of the simple processes of geometry if we undertake navigation projects just as we need reminding of God's Word on prayer when we feel a deep need in the heart. But let me stipulate that no one, other than the Lord, can teach us how to pray. Prayer is not a subject that is separate and apart from the simplicity of God's Word but, rather, encompasses all facets of it. No father or mother has to teach a baby when to ask for food. He cries out in hunger, and the nourishing milk is forthcoming. The same is true of prayer. The more simple, direct, and heart-felt a prayer, the greater the ears of the Lord to hear it. You may aver, "But God hears **All** prayers." No, He does not choose to hear all: "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*" (Psalm 66:18)

God does not **always** answer our prayers according to our praying. Why not? "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*" (James 4:3) We often ask for things that we desire instead of that which is edifying. I will point out below a few additional characteristics of the prayer life of the saints of God.

WHY PRAY?

Because there is an expected response to prayer – a response that the supplicant often does not wait to hear. We sometimes stress our desires as if to a 'Genie in a Bottle' and wait for the Genie to grant our wish. That is not the nature of real, Godly prayer, and God is Sovereign and

never obligated to grant our demands for wealth and other such things. Prayer is ‘effectual’ for the sincere appellant. “. . . *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*” (James 5:16)

We pray to be spared temptation: “*Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” (Matthew 26:41)

We pray because we are commanded to do so: “*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*” (Luke 18:1) How is it possible to pray always? We pray always by making our lives a fitting prayer to God in the testimony we live out day by day.

WHEN TO PRAY?

When confronted with grave decisions: “*And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*”¹³ *And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.*” (Luke 6:12-13) As well, we pray in moments of danger as did Peter when sinking in the sea. The foxholes of mortal combat makes Christians of every man!

We should make it a point to pray at three cardinal points of the day. If we prayed at mealtime, this would be satisfied in breakfast, lunch, and dinner (supper for those from Tennessee). “*Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.*” (Psalm 55:17) We should, as well, seek the face of the Lord early every awakening day: “*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee...*” (Psalm 63:1)

We pray continually. Continual attitudes of prayer depends upon a continual acknowledgement and awareness of God’s will for our lives. “*Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*” (Romans 12:12)

Observe that patience and rejoicing attend a continual prayer attitude toward God.

Do not cease to pray! *“Rejoice evermore. ¹⁷Pray without ceasing. ¹⁸In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”* (1Thessalonians 5:16-18) It is that phrase, *“In every thing”* over which many stumble. They prefer to give thanks only for those benefits of God that coincide with the will of the supplicant.

Pray both in times of affliction as well as rejoicing. *“Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”* (James 5:13) Even sorrow can be turned to rejoicing if one will resort to hymn-singing which, by the way, is merely a musical prayer. Do we mean it when we sing: Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me?

Pray when we have carelessly transgressed against another. *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”* (James 5:16) If the problem is **always** the fault of the other, better pray a special prayer for yourself!

HOW TO PRAY?

We pray in the Spirit, but we cannot pray in the Spirit if we are obsessed with the **wrong** spirit. *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”* (Ephesians 6:18) *“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.”* (Jude 20)

We perform a labor of prayer in remembering all for whom we pray and for specific aspects of need. *“Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.”* (Colossians 4:12) There are times when the need of prayer for others is urgent and great, yet we may foolishly think our present mundane

duties of greater importance.

It is important that we pray with understanding unless we are praying **for** understanding. “...*I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.*” (1 Corinthians 14:15) Not in some contrived ‘unknown tongue,’ but with understanding!

We must pray in faith, with Holy hands – not doubting the result to be the Will of the Lord even if not our own. “*I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*” (1 Timothy 2:8) Not wavering in faith: “*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*” (James 1:6)

WHAT TO PRAY FOR?

The answer to this question can best be summarized in “...*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*” (Luke 22:42)

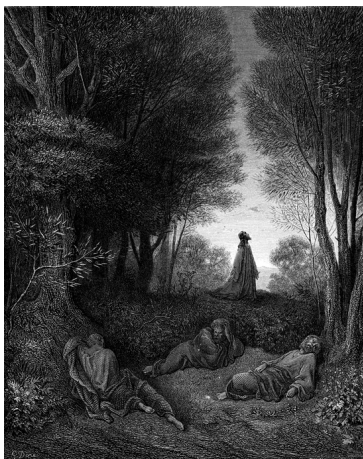
For laborers for the Lord’s Vineyard to be sent to us. “. . . *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;* ³⁸*Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*” (Matthew 9:37-38) And we pray for all men, as well. “*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; ²For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.*” (1 Timothy 2:1-2) As distasteful as it was for me to pray for our Forty-Fourth President₁₄, I was obligated to do so – not for his wicked ways, but for the salvation of his soul like unto that of Saul on the Road to Damascus.

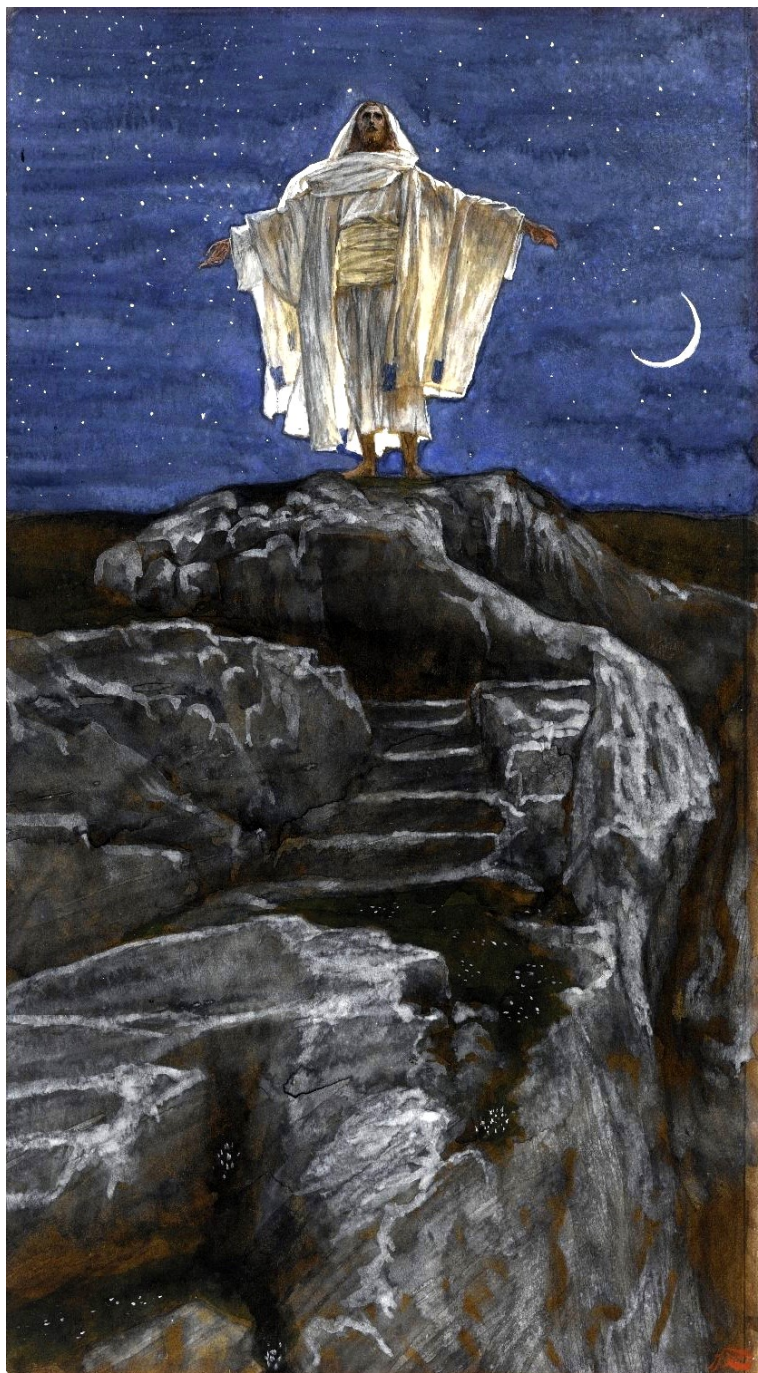
Perhaps the most important aspect of prayer is to pray for understanding of God’s will for, with that understanding and conformity to it, we shall always be on Holy ground

with the Lord; *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; ¹⁰That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; ¹¹Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;”* (Colossians 1:9-11)

Here is the eleventh Commandment of Prayer and the loop-hole breaker: *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”* (Philippians 4:6) The term ‘careful’ used here does not mean caution, but do not be overburdened with care for the temporal things of life. Eternity is far longer than your moment of vaporous existence on this planet. We ask for our wants with thanksgiving, if we have prayed in the Will of God for those things, for it is certain that God will always grant what it is His will for us.

I realize that I have plagiarized God’s Holy Word to a great extent in this book; however, God’s Word is not copyrighted and you may be certain, I have permission of the Author.





The Unchangeable Christ

“Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8) “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” (Malachi 3:6) “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? ²He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. ³He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. ⁴In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.” (Psalm 15:1-4)

There is in our day a growing herd mentality. In my considered opinion, there is an empirical difference between the “Little Flock of Christ” and the great herds of humanity that are lost to light and love. Webster’s eleventh Collegiate Dictionary renders the meaning of ‘herd’ to mean, among other things, “a congregation of gregarious animals kept under human control,” or as the “undistinguished masses” in human terms. I would far rather be a sheep led by the Good Shepherd who leads me to green pastures than a goat led by a ten-horned dictator whose destination is the slaughter house.

God is Immutable in His Nature, in His Law, in His Character, and in His Whole Being. If God were capable of change, into what would He change? Of course, that is a totally hypothetical proposition since God cannot change into that which He is not; and anything other than what God is now (and forever **has** been) would render Him something other than God.

All sorts of spiritual error has grown from the dispensationalism₁₅ that is being propagated abroad in modern denominations which suggests that the God of Abraham has somehow changed in His approach to those of our own time. That would necessarily presume that Abraham would not be Christian in the sense that we today are Christian – that

he was saved by some other means than the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a certain, limited sense (not that of the dispensationalists) that would be correct since the difference in Abraham's salvation was a fervent faith in the unseen, but anchored in the Promise of Christ nonetheless. Christ had not yet died to redeem Abraham's soul as He has done for you and me. So, Abraham's faith was a tremendous faith in a Promise God had made ere it was ever realized in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. We today, on the other hand, have the privilege to have faith in a promise already fulfilled at Calvary. That is the **only** difference. God did not change in the process – He gave His promise, and He fulfilled that promise.

All that happened in the Old Testament Law and Prophets pointed to the need and imminent fulfillment of a Redeemer in our Lord Jesus Christ. The God of Eden is precisely the same in Nature and in Disposition as the God and Father of our Lord. The promise was even made, in veiled shadow, in Eden to Adam and Eve, of a Redeemer to come.

We do have a Friend that is closer to our bosom's cherished heart than any blood brother – the Lord Jesus Christ! As a matter of fact, our Lord Jesus Christ is far more a blood relative – if we are born anew of the Spirit – than any other earthly relative. It is His Blood that has cleansed us and no other. It is His sinless Blood that redeemed us on the cross at Calvary. So those who hear His voice and follow Him are truly His family – His mother, His brother, His sister, His child. He gives us that principle in the Gospels: *“While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.”*⁴⁷ *Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.”*⁴⁸ *But he answered and said unto him that told him, **Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?***⁴⁹ *And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, **Behold my mother and***

my brethren! ⁵⁰For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” (Matthew 12:46-50) There seems to be some evidence that His mother, Mary, and His brothers, were not close spiritual followers of their close relative until after the evidence of His Lordship was demonstrated at Calvary and the Garden Tomb. They did not seem to follow after Him to hear His teaching as multitudes of others did do.

We have all had, I believe unless we are very fortunate, friends whom we held close in love and who have later betrayed our trust and turned against us. Or we have at least had friends who have avoided our glance among certain company whose loyalties may not be in conformity with our own. Political correctness has existed since Adam, and was evidenced by the cowardly Roman Procurator, Pontius Pilate, who found no fault in Jesus, but nonetheless sentenced Him to be crucified to please the crowd.

An old friend of mine who died approximately 150 years ago (any of my teachers is a friend), William Arnot₁₆, compares the Lord and those who are either drawn, or repulsed to Him, as two bar magnets. The metal (iron) is the same in both just as Jesus came in the flesh to be like us in physical form. The two magnets have force fields that are both similar. Are we not made in the image of God? When our magnet is aligned with the force-field of God, we are inalterably drawn to Him so closely that there is no daylight between. But if our poles (wills) are turned in the opposite direction away from the Great Magnet which is God, we are repulsed at His approach. But He is always properly aligned in truth and righteousness and not subject to any magnetic variation. It is the nature of the elect to be drawn to God by way of their magnetic poles being aligned with His perfect will and purpose. If we are simply iron without magnetic natures, then we may become magnetized with His will by close association with His metal and truth. One

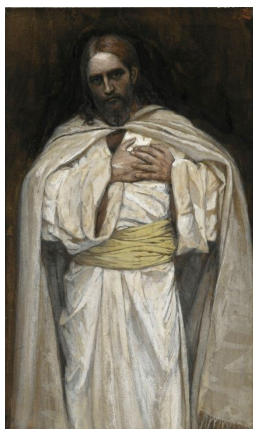
cannot resist the draw of God's Magnet (Jesus Christ) when we have known Him in intimate love and faith.

A cloud is incapable of becoming a stone – an object of a totally different property. Neither is Jesus Christ capable of sinning because that would change the nature of who He is. He is God. God cannot sin! When we become One with Christ, we also become One with God the Father because Christ is One with the Father. If we are in one circle that is located within another circle, we are also in that circle, or one with it.

When I was younger, I used to teach navigation to Army and Allied Flight Students. Whether the navigation was visual or instrument, a map was essential to navigation. A map is necessary as well for navigation in driving. You may object, "But I use a GPS." Maybe so, but the GPS system is based upon land and sea features that constitute a map. In land navigation, if the map displays a mountain pass that is easily recognizable, we may use that feature as a landmark, or a waypoint, for our navigation. If suddenly the mountain pass no longer exists, every other consideration of our navigation is called into question because the mountain pass has **always** been there since Eden. It simply could not happen, and we would have made a terrible mistake in the plotting of our journey. God is a Great Mountain that never moves else we would have no sure means of navigation in faith and trust. *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. ²My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth."* (Psalm 121:1-2) The Mountain of God stands inviolate to the shifting winds and sands of man's carnal nature. He is a Mountain that cannot be moved. If we will have the benefit of that Mountain and its Vantage Point of Truth, we must come to the Mountain. It will not remove to the wilderness of sin in which we bask. The Great Rock from that Mountain came once to us while we were yet sinners, and smash-

ed to smitherens all of the inferior dust heaps of man. But it never truly moved from its natural place of righteousness and truth. It is a solid Found-ation that cannot be moved. If we become stones removed from that Rock, we will bear His image and likeness, and cannot be moved from the Way that the Holy Map (**Bible**) has plotted for us. *“I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. ⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. ¹⁰For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.* (a prophetic reference to our Lord Jesus Christ and His resurrection on the third day – more than three days was generally considered a time when bodily decomposition and decay set in) *¹¹Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”* (Psalm 16:8-11)

What is your course in life? Have you plotted your own way in the Wilderness of Life; or have you placed your trust and faith in the **Way**, the **Truth**, and the **Life** which Jesus Christ is to the Believer? He is the only **Way** that we can navigate to Eternal Life with Him!





The Seal

“And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.” (Nehemiah 9:38)

“Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse.” (Esther 8:8)

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” (Song of Solomon 8:6)

“He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” (John 3:33)

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ³Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.” (Revelation 7:2-3)

Having lived in Iran for many years, and many more in parts of the Far East, I recognize the importance of a physical seal used by Asians to authenticate documents such as deeds and certificates. No document in Korea is considered valid without a seal of the executor, and every adult has a seal. The seal exceeds a signature or a handshake in importance. The Royal Seal of Kings, and even of individuals, was of the same importance in ancient Israel which is, indeed, part of the continent of Asia. Any representative of the King who executed documents on behalf of the sovereign with his seal did so with his express authority.

The importance attached to seals in the East is so great that without one no document is regarded as authentic. In many cases the seal consisted of a lump of clay, impressed with the seal and attached to the document, whether of papyrus

or other material by strings. In other cases wax was used. In sealing a sepulchre or box, the fastening was covered with clay or wax, and the impression from a seal of one in authority was stamped upon it, so that it could not be broken open without discovery. The signet-ring was an ordinary part of a man's equipment.

When the young Prodigal returned to his father's home after a long absence of marauding and riotous living, the old father gave him, in addition to a Robe and Shoes, a Ring (See Luke 15:11-22). This was likely a signet ring symbolizing that the boy now had the authority of the father. The believer in Christ also acts with the authority of God when he teaches the Word faithfully and with conviction.

God uses the term 'seal' often in Holy Writ to express His concurrence with a covenant or a mission. It marks His authority as well as His people who are sealed with the very seal of God. *"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, **having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.** And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."* (2 Timothy 2:19)

I have attended churches who taught the only necessary duty of the sinner who would come to salvation was merely to make an audible proclamation that he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner may not even know who Jesus Christ is at the time. How can one believe in one whom they do not know. But by coming forward and making such a proclamation, with or without full knowledge, that person is immediately added to the well-published church roles as a member of the church. He may never darken the doors of the church again. I am not saying that such a public profession should not be made, but I am saying that such should be made with at least a fundamental understanding of to whom the proclaimant is pledging allegiance.

All who truly believe and have made such a profession,

who have been baptized and at some point demonstrated a fundamental knowledge of their obligations and privileges as a Christian, are admitted on good ground to the church. In another sense, there are genuine Christians who do have a fundamental understanding of who Christ is, and what He has done for them, who do not develop sound roots of faith because they are not nurtured by the church in Holy Scripture and may be stunted in their growth as a result, yet they are saved.

The Holy Spirit is the Divine Agent who wields the Seal of God and marks the elect with the Seal. Many a rough and ignorant sinner stumbles through many years of life until, one day most unexpectedly, a Bible verse, testimony, or street corner preacher utters the words that set on fire the spirit of the sinner and he is drawn to the Mercy Seat of Grace. On the other hand, many walk through the world knowing the Bible very well, but have yet to be touched by the Holy Spirit. It is not enough to possess a spiritual desire – one must base that desire on truth. Remember the words of our Lord to the Woman at the Well: *“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.”*²²*Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.*²³*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*²⁴*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:21-24)

All mankind have some identifying credential that is ever before the eyes of the Lord – either a Mark or a Seal! What is the difference? Altogether a mighty difference! At least in the days of Paul, the **Mark** was sometimes a means to distinguish the unrighteous from the righteous: *“Now I beseech you, brethren, **mark** them which cause divisions and*

offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” (Romans 16:17)

What of the Seal of God and the Mark of the anti-Christ? One designates the children of God and followers of Christ, and the other (**Mark**) designates those who will follow, or do follow now, the anti-Christ.

THE MARK: *“And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.”¹² And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.¹³ And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,¹⁴ And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.¹⁵ And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.¹⁶ And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to **receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:**¹⁷ And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” (Revelation 13:11-17)* Those of the Preterist₁₇ belief would have us believe this has already happened. It has not. There may be partial fulfillment of some of these conditions related, but never in the stark manifestation described in our text.

The comic-strip-like tracts I have seen presenting the mark of the beast as a UPC label or some other physical mark on the forehead is neither logical nor biblical. The KJV (unlike the politically correct modern versions) tell us the Mark is **In** the right hand and **In** the forehead. The significance of

this will be related in the next few sentences.

THE SEAL OF GOD: *“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, ³Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we **have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.**”* (Revelation 7:2-3) Where are the Elect of God sealed? **In their Foreheads - not On their foreheads!**

The significant gems of truth hidden here is the fact that both the **mark** and the **seal** are internal – **In The Forehead**. The frontal lobe of the brain is the seat of logic and reason. It is the part of the brain where decisions are made. When we reject Christ and accept the Serpent as our master, it is a conscious decision which marks us an unrepentant sinner. It is a conscious decision. No one holds us down and stamps some mark on our forehead. It is a deliberate decision made in the mind and heart. Many are deceived to believe in this external branding.

Likewise, when one is drawn by the Holy Spirit accepts the authority of the Lord, he willingly assumes the Mind that was in Christ to direct his path. He makes a conscious decision as drawn by the Holy Spirit. Once sealed, that seal is permanent. Christ has never lost a soul which the Father has placed in His hands.

Which do you bear – a Mark or a Seal?





Standing Alone?

“And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock.” (Exodus 33:21)

“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?” (Joshua 5:13)

Let us suppose that we are hauled before some great tribunal having the power to determine whether we live or die? Our Crime? Holding beliefs of which the whole world disagrees with just scanty exceptions. The beliefs we have espoused and propagated are completely new to the world of the day in which we have lived and are contrary to the entire power structure in place. How would we respond?

Of course, I refer to the great Continental Reformer, Martin Luther. He was arraigned by the Diet of Worms¹⁸ in 1521 – the convening authority headed by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V¹⁹. Martin Luther had defied the Roman Catholic church and her titular head, the Pope, by preaching against several heresies propagated by Rome – indulgences, a number of unbiblical sacraments, the authority of the Pope in spiritual matters, the privilege of the believer to derive his faith and worship solely from Holy Scripture, and a host of other issues. When the council insisted that Luther recant, he courageously refused placing his very life in jeopardy saying: *“I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen.”*²⁰

As a result of Luther’s refusal to recant, the Diet of Worms issued the Edict of Worms²¹ that labeled Luther a heretic and banned the reading of his writings. The edict made Luther an outlaw, and the understanding of the Diet of Worms was that Luther would soon be arrested, punished, and likely executed.

Luther had stood alone facing the overwhelming powers of the Roman authorities of Europe. His life was in imminent danger. Through an amazing array of circumstances, Luther was enabled to flee to safe ground. Remember, Luther stood facing the wrath of the Diet of Worms and yet, had the courage to defy that council based on his faith and religious convictions which he had discovered in Holy Writ. Well, not truly alone, for any who stand on the right hand of the Lord has the Lord standing on their left.

It is not always easy to stand for truths that we know with absolute certainty to be right; but when we do stand up for right, we do not truly stand alone though the world be against us. The escape of Luther from the multitude of powers gathered about him remind me of the similar escape of our Lord from those who wished to destroy Him:

*“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. ¹⁷And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, ¹⁸**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, ¹⁹To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. ²⁰And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹And he began to say unto them, **This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. ²²And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son? ²³And he said unto them, **Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. ²⁴And he said,*******

Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. ²⁵*But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;* ²⁶*But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.* ²⁷*And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.* ²⁸*And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,* ²⁹*And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.* ³⁰*But he passing through the midst of them went his way,”* (Luke 4:16-30)

The Lord has shown is the Way to stand against every contrary wind. If we follow in His footsteps, bearing our certain crosses, He will “. . . leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.” (Psalm 23:3) We never stand alone when we stand with Christ and His righteousness. In fact, the day will come when each one of us will stand alone facing the King of Glory just as did the Woman taken in Adultery who was, in every sense of the word, just like each of us. *“And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”* ¹⁰*When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?* ¹¹*She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”* (John 8:9-11) We have all been taken red-handed in our sins, and we shall one day come face to face with our Lord. Will we face Him imbued with His imputed righteousness on that day, or condemned by a multitude of unforgiven sins?

How could we not stand up for righteousness and the Lord's honor when He has never failed us in standing on our part? Remember Joshua before Jericho: *"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?"*¹⁴ *And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?"*¹⁵ *And the captain of the LORD's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so."* (Joshua 5:13-15) Who do you suppose this "Captain of the Hosts of the Lord" was? I believe it was none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. Why do I believe this? Because an angel is not worthy of worship, but Moses worshipped this Personage and the ground before him was Holy Ground (just as Moses before the Burning bush). This Captain is the same who is mentioned in the last Book of our Bible:

*"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."*¹² *His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself."*¹³ *And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God."*¹⁴ *And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."* (Revelation 19:11-14)

Life offers many occasions which require the Christian soldier (and we are all soldiers) to stand up for truth. Often these seem minor and of little significance, but all matters of truth and error are significant. If the soldier

flees on the foreign field before the first shot fired in anger, what do you suppose he will do when the war toxins sound at his front door? We are judged by the small things as much as the great ones. The old axiom holds true: “He who will stand for nothing will fall for everything.”

From the early moment of my consecration, I have been confronted with the tempting voices of fellow Christians to simply compromise just a little here or there in the doctrines and worship of the church. These suggestions are usually made from hearts that desire to see the church grow and are not malicious. But as a bishop, it falls to my lot to defend the faith – not just the major points of the faith, but every single principle of it as related in Holy Scripture. Surely, our church could grow to enormous proportions if we would only compromise here and there until we are no different from the many other fallen churches who have preceded us in that apostacy. To compromise a single principle of truth is to betray our Lord who died for us. It also betrays the labors and faith of those who established our church on the solid Rock of our Salvation which is Christ. It would dishonor Bishop Dees who sacrificed his personal fortune to establish a Holy Church edifying to God. It would discredit those men and women who stood up with Bishop Dees when courage called for it. It would discredit our former National Secretary who gave the best years of her life to insure that the Church remained anchored in Christ.

What about you, my friend? Will you stand to the line of battle, or do you prefer to sit this one out? Now is the time to prove your metal as a Christian believer in these perilous times.





I Shall Not Be Moved!

*“The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. ⁶The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. ⁷I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. ⁸I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, **I shall not be moved.** ⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. ¹⁰For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”* (Psalm 16:5-10)

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Psalm 1:3)

When the Hebrew children were captive in Babylon, they dreamed dreams of the fair land of Canaan. Their sorrow and remorse were ridiculed by the Babylonians. *“By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. ²We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. ³For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. ⁴How shall we sing the LORD’s song in a strange land?”* (Psalm 137:1-4) There, likewise, was a deep yearning in the hearts of the negro slaves who were brought against their will to the New World for their homeland and people across the blue waters of the Atlantic. Even those born in America entertained a deep and mysterious yearning for something that was missing in their lives which was Africa. As a result, they eagerly grasped every word spoken of the glories of Heaven and the Lord Jesus Christ whose great love extended, not only to the conqueror, but to the slave as well.

The folksy Gospel below is an example of the songs they sang *“By the rivers of Babylon. . . .”* (Psalm 137:1) The tune and lyrics are products of the men and women who labored under the sun in the fields of their masters. You

might say, both lyrics and tune are gifts of the Holy Ghost. The tune to which the hymn is sung is “***I Shall not Be Moved***.” There are many verses to this song and almost every version is different; however, the three verses below are the most common in modern hymnals.

I SHALL NOT BE MOVED

*Jesus is my Savior, I shall not be moved;
In His love and favor, I shall not be moved,
Just like a tree that's planted by the waters,
Lord, I shall not be moved.*

*In my Christ abiding, I shall not be moved;
In His love I'm hiding, I shall not be moved,
Just like a tree that's planted by the waters,
Lord, I shall not be moved.*

*If I trust Him ever, I shall not be moved;
He will fail me never, I shall not be moved,
Just like a tree that's planted by the waters,
Lord, I shall not be moved.*

“Jesus is my Savior, I shall not be moved; In His love and favor, I shall not be moved, Just like a tree that's planted by the waters, Lord, I shall not be moved.” The Lord Jesus Christ is, indeed, our Fortress, our Protector, our Redeemer, and the very **Rock** of our Salvation. He is a great Stone that is fixed and immovable – the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is something else, too, to His elect – He is the Ark which they are called to enter in order to escape the coming wrath and ruin to befall the world. If Christ cannot be moved (and He cannot be), then all who are in Him shall likewise be immovable from that security that is only available in that great Ark of God. *“And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”*²⁸ ***Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, where***

by we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” (Hebrews 12:27-28)

The green and flourishing tree stands at the very brink of the river. It sinks its roots deep down into the sub-soil for that nourishing Water of Life beneath at depths uncommon for the shrub. It is like that Tree of Life that was removed to the Paradise of God: “*And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. ²In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there **the tree of life**, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*” (Revelation 22:1-2) This is the Tree of the Garden which Adam rejected and which symbolizes the Lord of Life, Jesus Christ!

“In my Christ abiding, I shall not be moved; In His love I’m hiding, I shall not be moved, Just like a tree that’s planted by the waters, Lord, I shall not be moved.” When the Holy Spirit draws a believer to the Mercy Seat of Christ (Christ is, Himself, the Mercy Seat), The Lord Jesus Christ comes to abide in that person’s heart – He does not sojourn for a time, He abides in that heart forever. The mystery of Christ’s Lordship is an amazing wonder for He not only abides in us, but we, too, abide in Him. “*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. ⁶If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*” (John 15:4-6)

“If I trust Him ever, I shall not be moved; He will fail me never, I shall not be moved, Just like a tree that’s planted by the waters, Lord, I shall not be moved.” Trusting the

Lord is walking in the Way of which He has told us – the Straight and Narrow Way. On either side are the treacher-ies of stone and briar, ravine and wild beast. On that Nar-row Way, we shall not be moved though the very earth quakes all around. Our Lord will never fail us. He is able! *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”* (Hebrews 7:25)

NOTE: Many of the old Negro Spirituals are upbeat and happy projecting the faith-ordained hope of a better day; songs such as “O Them Golden Slippers,” “Roll Jordan, Roll!” and “Down by the River Side.” But some are quite sad and reflect the pitiful circumstances in which they came to be sung – songs such as “Swing Lo, Sweet Chariot,” “Steal Away Home to Jesus,” “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen,” and “Go Down Moses.”

It is an amazing gift of the Holy Spirit that gives us, in all our conditions and straights, a song in the night even to those whose plight seems to mimic that of the prophet Job: *“By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. ¹⁰But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night; ¹¹Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?”* (Job 35:9-11)

It is my hope and prayer that God has given each reader of this chapter a multitude of songs in the night, for sorrows come upon each and every one.



The Secret Place of the Most High

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. ³Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. ⁴He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. ⁵Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; ⁶Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. ⁷A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. ⁸Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. ⁹Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;” (Psalm 91:1-9)

“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.” (Psalm 27:5)

When we were very young, we never ran to the security of our house when a threat such as a mean dog or a loud thunderclap arose. What did we do? We always ran to our father’s side for we knew wherever our father was we would find comfort and safety. Our father was big and strong, and plenty able to defend us from every imaginable threat – or at least so we supposed. Certainly, our father would protect us to the utter extent of his strength, but there are many sorrows and fears that arise in life that are beyond the power of a mortal father to address. But there are no threats or dangers in this life that are beyond the power of our Father in Heaven to neutralize. He is our fortress, shield and buckler; and, yes, His wings are strong and broad in covering His children from all evils.

In a sense, we enjoy even greater intimacy of protection than His wings. We abide in His Heart, and He abides in ours. No worldly power can enter in to threaten that abode

in Christ. He does not sojourn as if a visitor, but He **Abides** in the Temples of our souls.

This is the very Secret Place of the Most High – a place of security, joy, and hope of which the world cannot know or intrude.

The Ninety-first Psalm is a psalm of encouragement throughout the long, dark night of our souls. It is preceded by a prayer of Moses (Ninetieth Psalm) which extolls our attention to our sins and the detriment they afford to our souls. That Ninetieth Psalm sets the stage for our understanding of the wages of sin; and the Ninety-first Psalm informs us the security that is made available in Christ where the penalty for sin has been satisfied by a Beautiful Savior and Redeemer.

It is the Godly love instilled in every believer by the Holy Ghost that, like Christ, we should have compassion on sinners whose hope is forlorn and whose souls are dead in trespasses and sins. We can relate to that unfortunate state of the soul for we walked in the same darkness ere the Light of the World lighted our path and brightened our steps. The close and intimate relationship we enjoy in Christ defines that Secret Place of our souls. This is not merely addressed in many of the Psalms, but throughout the Bible. That which our Beloved Teacher, the Holy Spirit, wishes us to remember with certain soundness, he reiterates over and over again. Repetition aids recall is a principle of learning of which God is the Master Teacher. *“Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. ¹⁰For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”* (Isaiah 28:9-10)

It is within the hidden chambers of the heart that the Holy Ghost makes His Temple at the moment of conversion.

There is none stronger in protection and security – none able to satisfy the thirst and hunger of the soul with such complete grace and harmony of spirit. The outward appearance of piety may be deceiving. But the perfect representation of our Lord Jesus Christ is defined in the Wilderness Tabernacle. Within it was decorated in fine linens, silk, gold, silver, and burnished brass. But to the world viewing the Tabernacle from the outside, it was perhaps the most common in attraction of all structures – in fact, it was covered outside with goat hair. This presented a very plain and uncomely appearance compared to the beauty of the inner courts. This perfectly depicts our Lord whose outer appearance was common and ordinary, yet His divine Spirit and Soul was invested in beauty, compassion and love.

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. ³He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. ⁶All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” (Isaiah 53:2-7)

There is an old Gospel song which asks: “Where can I go but to the Lord?” The question is rhetorical since there is no other savior or redeemer to whom we may make appeal.

He is the place of safety and our Ark of Salvation to which we must flee to avoid the coming day of wrath. As surely as that Ark of Noah rose higher and higher in the flood waters above the ruin and devastation below, so shall the believer in the Ark of Christ be lifted up in like manner on “the terrible day of the Lord.” *“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. ⁶And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD. ⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.”* (Psalm 27:5-7)

Every home has a ‘secret place’ of meeting with God – the prayer closet. It may be an enclosed structure in the house, merely a veil of covering, or a quiet and solitary place at which we can meet our Lord in prayer face-to-face. *“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. ⁶But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.”* (Matthew 6:5-6)

In His earthly ministry, even our Lord had a secret place of prayer to His Father in Heaven: *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”* (Mark 1:35) Why did our Lord resort to a solitary place? Because the Voice of our Father may be drowned out in the hustle and bustle of the busy thoroughfare. When the noise of barter, trade and entertainment is blasting in our ears, it is not easy to hear that still small voice which spoke to Elijah. *“And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him,*

and said, *Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.* ⁸*And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.* ⁹*And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?* ¹⁰*And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.* ¹¹*And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:* ¹²*And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.* ¹³*And it was so, when Elijah heard it that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?”* (1 Kings 19:7-13)

Until the heart is still and attentive in prayer, it is unlikely that we will hear the Voice of the Lord though He is able under every circumstance to open our ears. Enter into that “secret place of the Most High” and make your appeal directly to the Lord of Mercy and Grace. His ears are not stopped by any extraneous circumstance.





Whispering Hope

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”

(Hebrews 6:19)

Whispering Hope is not a hymn in the classical sense, but rather a Gospel Song. The Difference? A classical hymn teaches biblical doctrine whereas a Gospel song evokes devotional emotion and expresses joy in the promises of God.

Whispering Hope was composed by Septimus Winner in 1868. The author is sometimes referred to as *Alice Hawthorne* – an understandable pseudonym for a man with such a name as *Septimus Winner*. Mr. Winner is also the composer of the musical score of the song.

There are some interesting particulars regarding the author of this song. He is most noted for his folk ballads one of which is “*Oh Where, Oh Where has my Little Dog Gone.*” Another is a War Between the States favorite entitled, “*Listen to the Mocking Bird.*” Another added matter of interest is the fact that Septimus Winner was once charged by the Lincoln Administration with Treason for merely writing a song criticizing Lincoln’s firing of the gallant General George B. McClellan.

WHISPERING HOPE

*Soft as the voice of an angel,
Breathing a lesson unheard,
Hope with a gentle persuasion
Whispers her comforting word:
Wait till the darkness is over,
Wait till the tempest is done,
Hope for the sunshine tomorrow,
After the shower is gone.*

Refrain

*Whispering hope, oh how welcome thy voice,
Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice.*

*If, in the dusk of the twilight,
Dim be the region afar,
Will not the deepening darkness
Brighten the glimmering star?
Then when the night is upon us,
Why should the heart sink away?
When the dark midnight is over,
Watch for the breaking of day.*

Refrain

*Hope, as an anchor so steadfast,
Rends the dark veil for the soul,
Whither the Master has entered,
Robbing the grave of its goal.
Come then, O come, glad fruition,
Come to my sad weary heart;
Come, O Thou blest hope of glory,
Never, O never depart.*

Refrain

***“Soft as the voice of an angel, Breathing a lesson unheard,
Hope with a gentle persuasion Whispers her comforting
word: Wait till the darkness is over, Wait till the tempest is
done, Hope for the sunshine tomorrow, After the shower is
gone.”*** During the most desperate moments of this life, the Christian believer has a resource to call upon of which the world knows little – **Hope!** Hope is silent in its approach, but bears with its sweet savor a promise of tomorrow. When the believer is faced with insurmountable problems, he dares to hope, and that hope grows moment by moment. Every dark night has its brilliant sunrise morning. Storms of life have short life, and the peace of nature always follows in their paths. Even the chastening of God will pass into a wonderful day of rejoicing: *“For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.”* (Psalm 30:5) But for those who forget their Lord will see only clouds and more clouds after the dark night passes: *“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the*

years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; ²While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:" (Ecclesiastes 12:1-2)

REFRAIN: *"Whispering hope, oh how welcome thy voice, Making my heart in its sorrow rejoice."* It is no contradiction for the Christian to experience rejoicing in the midst of staggering sorrow. This, the world cannot comprehend.

"If, in the dusk of the twilight, Dim be the region afar, Will not the deepening darkness Brighten the glimmering star? Then when the night is upon us, Why should the heart sink away? When the dark midnight is over, Watch for the breaking of day." Regardless of the smothering darkness of the road ahead, when we walk with Christ, we bear with us the Light of the World. Where He is, there can exist no darkness. The stars of heaven twinkle with light by means of contrasting darkness and light. The stars cover the canopy of heaven during the bright sunshiny day, but we cannot see them for the sun's brightness. But the purple canopy of the night sky provides the contrast to see those points of light to guide us through our dark moments. The Evening Star brightens our dark night as a sure promise of coming morn. **It** is the Morning Star at daybreak – the last Star of Heaven to be vanquished by the rising Sun. That Bright Morning Star symbolizes the Presence of Christ in the darkness of our earthly walk; and the Sun represents the same Jesus Christ as our Sun of Righteousness to come at the End of Days.

"Hope, as an anchor so steadfast, Rends the dark veil for the soul, Whither the Master has entered, Robbing the grave of its goal. Come then, O come, glad fruition, Come to my sad weary heart; Come, O Thou blest hope of glory, Never, O never depart." An anchor will not hold tight when dropped in the swamps and wilderness waters of the

world; but when dropped into the stone-strewn depths of the sea or harbor, it adheres to a Rock and will not budge. When our Anchor of Hope is fastened upon the Rock of our Salvation, our bark will not drift. Instead, we turn the ships bow into the storm, drop anchor, and weather the storm until it passes. Life is like that. The 'dark veil' of the soul may be compared to the Temple Veil which was ripped asunder from top to bottom at the moment of Christ's death on the cross. It opened the Holiest of Holies to you and me so that we need none other High Priest as an intercessor other than our Lord. Our private souls, also, are a Temple unto the Lord whose veil needs to be rent from top to bottom that we may enter into eternal life with God the Father. The grave is thus robbed of its captive, and the tomb becomes merely a borrowed one like unto that of the Lord's Garden Tomb. Once we are called and chosen of God, our hope can never depart even under the gravest of circumstances.

See with what courage the reformers went to the burning stake refusing to recant their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some, such as the Bohemian Reformer, John Hus²². "The executioners undressed Hus and tied his hands behind his back with ropes, and his neck with a chain to a stake around which wood and straw had been piled up so that it covered him to the neck. Still at the last moment, the imperial marshal, Von Pappenheim²³, in the presence of the Count Palatine²⁴, asked him to save his life by a recantation, but Hus declined with the words "*God is my witness that I have never taught that of which I have been accused by false witnesses. In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached I will die to-day with gladness.*"²⁵" There upon the fire was kindled with John Wycliffe's²⁶ own manuscripts used as kindling for the fire. With uplifted voice Hus sang, "*Christ, thou Son of the living God, have mercy upon me.*" Among his dying words he proclaimed, "*In 100 years, God will raise up a man whose*

calls for reform cannot be suppressed.” His ashes were gathered and cast into the nearby Rhine River. Almost exactly one hundred years later, in 1517, Martin Luther nailed his famous Ninety-Five Theses of Contention (a list of Ninety-Five issues of heretical theology and crimes of the Roman Catholic Church) into the church door at Wittenberg. The prophecy of John Hus had come true!





The Hope of Christ

“... I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: ²⁶ And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25-26)

“... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)

The soul of man is born with an expectation of eternity in his heart. He cannot imagine a future time in which he does not exist; and he cannot imagine a time in the past when he did not exist. In fact, every soul has existed as long as the earth itself and even before, for we all have existed in the Mind of God from Eternity Past. He **knew** us before we were conceived in our mother's womb, and His acquaintance with us never ends. Can you imagine what it will be like for you on the third day after your own death? Is it a matter of great concern? Of course it is, if you have not made provision for the safe deposit and keeping of your soul in the Bosom of God our Father.

I once read an illustration of the captain of a great luxury liner, sailing near the center of the Pacific Ocean, who invited his principal guests into the captain's diner and informed them of a grave decision he had made. The captain announced, *“There is plenty of food on board. Life will proceed precisely as it has these past days at sea. Nothing will be omitted. Meals will be served, the orchestra will play at the nightly dances, there will be concerts and games; but I have decided not to continue to our port of destination. We will simply cruise about the wide Pacific in a great circle until our fuel is exhausted, then I shall sink this vessel.”* Please give this situation some deep thought in considering yourself a passenger aboard that vessel. Suddenly, the material things of this world hold no allurements, do they? Suddenly, sensual pleasures and desires will hold no man in their grasp. The deep yearnings and wonder of

our hearts turn to concerns for our eternal souls - a concern which we should have taken into account much sooner; for the earth itself is that ship which is going to sink at the discretion and timing of its Captain.

Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that His ultimate earthly ministry would end by His being nailed to the cross and cruelly ridiculed; yet He never faltered in His loving compassion, teaching, and miraculous works. How is that possible? It is because our Lord Jesus Christ knew His Father, and He knew His Father would never allow His only Begotten Son to suffer corruption. *“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”* ²⁸*Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.”* (Acts 2:27-28) You may say, “Well, that was easy for Christ because His Father had ‘made known to Him the ways of life - that He would rise from the dead.’” Good point, friend, but has not God the Father made the same promise in the leading text of this chapter that you, too, who believe shall never die? “. . . ***I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:*** ²⁶***And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?***” (John 11:25-26) Well, **Do You?**

If so, unlike the passengers of an ill-fated sea vessel, we have **HOPE** - the **HOPE** of the Resurrection made sure by our Lord Jesus Christ! What holds us back? Perhaps it is the senseless notion that this earthly life will never end and, even if it does, we will simply enter a timeless void of nothingness. That may be the popular belief taught in Evolution classes on college campuses, but I am sure you have been as amazed as I have been at the lack of common sense and logic being taught today on college campuses. Every soul has a port of destiny - either to be with our Lord Jesus Christ, or to be with all of the lost sinners and egregious evil doers of the world in Hell - **Forever!** So our prepara-

tion at this moment for our souls is of ultimate importance to us.

A lady once approached Ralph Waldo Emerson with the dismal news that “This world is coming to an end!” To her shock, Emerson responded, “That’s alright. I can get along without it.” All who know and cherish Christ can “Get along without it.” But if you do not claim Christ as Lord and Savior, to what depths will your soul sink when the world is no more?

“... *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.*” (John 11:25)

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Amen.





Footnotes

1 Page 18 - Lord Acton - Wikipedia - John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, 1st Baron Acton, 13th Marquess of Groppoli, (10 January 1834 – 19 June 1902) was an English Catholic historian, politician, and writer. He was the only son of Sir Ferdinand Dalberg-Acton, 7th Baronet, and a grandson of the Neapolitan admiral and prime minister Sir John Acton, 6th Baronet. Between 1837 and 1869 he was known as Sir John Dalberg-Acton, 8th Baronet. He is perhaps best known for the remark, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men . . .”, which he made in a letter to an Anglican Bishop.

2 Page 20 - Jesus - The Biblical Illustrator - Vol. 60 - Pastoral Commentary on First Peter By Charles Spurgeon, Alexander Maclaren, Henry Ward Beecher.

3 Page 20 - The Apostle's Creed: 1928 Book of Common Prayer; pp. 15 : *I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary: Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead: He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty: From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost: The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints: The Forgiveness of sins: The Resurrection of the body: And the Life everlasting. Amen.*

4 Page 21 - “an outward and visible form of an inward and spiritual grace.”- original quote from St. Augustine, but has become more than commonly expressed in our day (JLO) Jesus is the **visible, outward sign** of God's love for us. And ... For instance, Christ and the **Holy Spirit** make effective, through **grace**, the cleansing... that water ... a sacrament as ‘an **outward and visible sign** of an **inward** and invisible **grace.**’ St. Augustine, 5th Century.

5 Page 24 - A.D. and B.C. - Although A.D. (Anno Domini, meaning “in the year of our Lord”) and B.C. (Before Christ) are used in lands where professed Christianity predominates,

we have chosen to use the terms C.E. (Common Era) and B.C.E. (Before the Common Era). . . The literature printed by Jehovah's Witnesses is widely distributed in languages read by many non-Christians. . . . Significantly, the descriptions C.E. and B.C.E. are growing in usage, and they appear in almost all modern dictionaries and in many scholarly works.. - **Watchtower Online Library - Awake 2009 - Online magazine of the Jehovah's Witness**

6,7 Page 27 - “. . . delivered from their sin,” “. . . expense from their faith.” Adam Clarke Commentary: 1 Peter 4:1 - two quotes; As Christ hath suffered - He is your proper pattern; have the same disposition he had; the same forgiving spirit, with meekness, gentleness, and complete self-possession. He that hath suffered in the flesh, hath ceased from sin - This is a general maxim, if understood literally: The man who suffers generally reflects on his ways, is humbled, fears approaching death, loathes himself because of his past iniquities, and ceases from them; for, in a state of suffering, the mind loses its relish for the sins of the flesh, because they are embittered to him through the apprehension which he has of death and judgment; and, on his application to God's mercy, he is delivered from his sin.

Some suppose the words are to be understood thus: “Those who have firmly resolved, if called to it, to suffer death rather than apostatize from Christianity, have consequently ceased from, or are delivered from, the sin of saving their lives at the expense of their faith.” Others think that it is a parallel passage to Romans 6:7, and interpret it thus: “He that hath mortified the flesh, hath ceased from sin.” Dr. Bentley applies the whole to our redemption by Christ: He that hath suffered in the flesh hath died for our sins. But this seems a very constrained sense.

8Page 30 - Shore batteries refer to the huge naval batteries that protect the coastal regions of the United States from invasions. God's shore batteries are His Words expressed in Holy Scripture. God's Word is a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12) that cuts two ways - one to save, and the other to condemn. So the Shore Batteries of God defend the people of the Kingdom - Christians, but are designed to destroy the plans and purposes of the enemies of God.

9 **Page 33** - “**Sober . . . demeanor**” is “marked by sedate or gravely or earnestly thoughtful character or demeanor. - <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sober>

10 **Page 58 - Brightly Beams our Father’s Mercy . . . Lights along the Shore** - Philip P. Bliss – *The Charm: A Collection of Sunday School Music* (Chicago, Illinois: Root & Cady, 1871)

11 **Page 63 - Devoted Christians of Levant** - The Christians of the Levant are those of Syria, Turkey, Armenia, Lebanon, and Jordan for the most part. Most are of Catholic affiliation being the descendants of the Crusaders. Others, such as the Armenian Church (the first Church established after the Apostolic age) are comprised of Orthodox Christians founded by St. Gregory at Ichmiadzen. The Church of the Levant has undergone far greater persecution than any others to my knowledge. JLO.

12 **Page 69 - Arminians** – adherents to the Arminian law - Arminians believe that, through grace, *God* restores *free will* concerning salvation to all humanity, and each individual, therefore, is able either to accept the Gospel call through *faith* or resist it through unbelief.

13 **Page 76 - E.M. Bounds** - Edward McKendree Bounds prominently known as E.M. Bounds, was an American author, attorney, and member of the Methodist Episcopal Church South clergy. He is known for writing eleven books, nine of which focused on the subject of prayer. Only two of Bounds' books were published before he died.

14 **Page 79 - Forty-Fourth President of the United States** - Barack Hussain Obama.

15 **Page 82 - Dispensationalism** - Considers biblical history as divided by God into dispensations, defined periods or ages to which God has allotted distinctive administrative principals. According to dispensationalism, each age of God’s plan is thus administered in a certain way, and humanity is responsible as a steward during that time.

16 **Page 84 - William Arnot** - (1808-1875) was a Scottish minister and theological writer.

¹⁷ **Page 91 - Preterist** - a Christian eschatological view, interprets some (partial preterism) or all (full preterism) prophecies of the Bible as events which have already happened.

¹⁸ **Page 94 - The Diet of Worms 1521** - (German: *Reichstag zu Worms*) was an **imperial diet** (assembly) of the **Holy Roman Empire** called by Emperor **Charles V**. It was held at the Heylshof Garden in **Worms**, then an **Imperial Free City** of the Empire. An imperial diet was a formal deliberative assembly of the whole Empire.

¹⁹ **Page 94 - Charles V** - (1500 – 1558) was Holy Roman Emperor and Archduke of Austria from 1519, King of Spain (Castile and Aragon) from 1516, and Lord of the Netherlands as titular Duke of Burgundy from 1506. As head of the rising House of Habsburg during the first half of the 16th century, his dominions in Europe included the Holy Roman Empire, extending from Germany to northern Italy with direct rule over the Austrian hereditary lands and the Burgundian Low Countries, and a unified Spain with its southern Italian kingdoms of Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia. Furthermore, his reign encompassed both the long-lasting Spanish and the short-lived German colonizations of the Americas. The personal union of the European and American territories of Charles V was the first collection of realms labelled” “the empire on which the sun never sets.”

²⁰ **Page 94 - I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen** - Johann Eck at the Diet of Worms, speaking on behalf of the Empire as assistant of the Archbishop of Trier, presented Luther with copies of his writings laid out on a table and asked him if the books were his, and whether he stood by their contents. Luther confirmed he was their author, but requested time to think about the answer to the second question. He prayed, consulted friends, and gave his response the next day: “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. **I cannot and will not recant anything,**

since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.” (Brecht)

²¹ **Page 94 - Edict of Worms** - (*Wormser Edikt*), which addressed Martin Luther and the effects of the Protestant Reformation. It was conducted from 28 January to 25 May 1521, with the Emperor Charles V presiding.

²² **Page 113 - John Hus** - c. (1372 - 1415), sometimes anglicized as **John Hus** or **John Huss**, and referred to in historical texts as *Johannes Hus* or *Johannes Huss*, was a Czech theologian and philosopher who became a church reformer and an inspirer of Hussitism, a key predecessor to Protestantism and a seminal figure in the Bohemian Reformation.

²³ **Page 113 - Von Pappenheim - Gottfried Heinrich Graf zu Pappenheim** (1594 - 1632) was a field marshal of the Holy Roman Empire in the Thirty Years' War.

²⁴ **Page 113 - Count Palatine– Louis III, Count Palatine of the Rhine** (German: *Ludwig III. der Ältere or der Bärtige*) (1378 – 1436), was an Elector Palatine of the Rhine from the house of Wittelsbach in 1410–1436.

²⁵ **Page 113 - “God is my witness that I have never taught that of which I have been accused by false witnesses. In the truth of the Gospel which I have written, taught, and preached I will die to-day with gladness.”** At the place of execution, he knelt down, spread out his hands, and prayed aloud. The executioner undressed Hus and tied his hands behind his back with ropes, and bound his neck with a chain to a stake around which wood and straw had been piled up so that it covered him to the neck. At the last moment, the imperial marshal, von Pappenheim, in the presence of the Count Palatine, asked Hus to recant and thus save his own life. Hus declined, stating this quote.

²⁶ **Page 113 - John Wycliffe** - c. 1320s – 1384) was an English scholastic philosopher, theologian, biblical translator, reformer, priest, and a seminary professor at the University of Oxford. He became an influential dissident within the Roman Catholic priesthood during the 14th century and is considered an important predecessor to Protestantism.



Bio-Sketch - Bishop Jerry L. Ogles

Born in Gatlinburg, Tennessee on June 3, 1943 while father was serving in Europe during World War II.

Attended US Military Academy at West Point (Class of 1968) and commissioned as an Armor (Tank) Officer.

Attended University of Tennessee and Cranmer Seminary (Masters of Theology and Dr. Divinity – honorary).

Attended Flight School at Ft. Rucker, Alabama and became an Army Aviator. Served in Korea, Japan, Germany, Middle East and Southeast Asia.

Served with US State Department in Iran from 1973 to 1979 on State Department FMS Contract to Government of Iran. Commander of advanced Flight Training.

Returned to US Army Aviation School in 1979 and served alternately as Flight Commander, Deputy Director of Primary Flight Training, and finally as Director of Academic Division, US Army Warfighting Center.

Appointed Lay Reader, AOC, 1988. Ordained in 1995 into Holy Orders of the Anglican Orthodox Church. Served as minister, St. Andrews Anglican Church in Enterprise, AL (1995-Present). Ordained as Priest in 1997. Consecrated as Bishop in the year 2000. Was appointed Presiding Bishop and Metropolitan of the National and World Church in 2002 to present.

Currently serves also as Chancellor of Faith Theological Seminary, Gujranwala, Pakistan.

Master Army Aviator

Life Member of Association of Graduates

Life Member Military Order of the World Wars

Life Member ROA (Army)

Life Member, Army Athletic Association

Member, China, Post #1, American Legion.

Life Member, Veterans of Foreign Wars

“Bishop Jerry is an able minister of the gospel and an accomplished author concerning Holy Scripture as well as the doctrines and teachings of Traditional Anglicanism. He has inspired many men, both young and old and from across the world, to enter the ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. His works are uplifting as well as challenging while at all times they remain faithful to God’s word written.”

The Rev. Bryan Dabney+ St. John’s AOC Mississippi

“Good writing reveals for everyman the depths of human experience and makes us better human beings. Good theology reveals for everyman the deep things of God and makes us better souls. Not since the time of the Reformers and the Puritans has any writer so combined good literature with good theology in such an accessible way as Bishop Jerry Ogles.

His writing is clear, uncomplicated, and to the point. His meditations are written for all, believer and unbeliever alike, and are meant - with evangelical zeal - to move hearts. These messages come from the heart, and plainly reflect the personal, biblical spirituality of one who knows the love of God and has a deep desire to share it.”

+Bishop Charley Morley, AOC Bishop of Alabama

“It is indeed an honour and a pleasure for me to recommend to you, *Reason for Hope*. Christians are not immune to the trials and tribulations of life. The year 2020 has been a testimony to this fact. Therefore, the words of James remind us of the blessing and hope that God has in store for all who trust in Him, “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (James 1:12, KJV). Bishop Jerry Ogles writes not only from a personal knowledge of the Word of God but from his own experience. He is a true soldier in the Army of our Lord Jesus Christ and encourages all in Christ to “fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou are also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (I Timothy 6:12, JV). The Gospel of our Saviour is the Hope of every Christian. May *Reason for Hope* strengthen you in your daily walk with our Lord.”

Rev. James L. Cavanah+II, Th.D.

Priest, AOC; Pastor, Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

