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LIFE IN CHRIST

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NEED OF CHRIST

Life in Christ! "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4); "Jesus therefore said unto them again . . . The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:7,10); "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6); "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Colossians 3:3,4); "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:11,12). See Ephesians 2:1,5,6.

Life in Christ! To receive, live, and enjoy life in Christ is the most wonderful goal that any person can possibly have. This series of lessons is to help you realize this goal, with its glorious consummation of living forever with God in heaven.

Life in Christ! That is a life which is freely offered to all men, regardless of race, color, nationality, etc., by their gracious, loving Creator through His blessed Son. See Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Timothy 2:3,4; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 3:20; 22:17. Those responsible persons who fail to realize this glorious life in Christ have only themselves to blame. To such as these Jesus said, "And ye will not come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5:40).

Universality of Sin

Men stand in need of Christ because of their sinful condition, which is the state of spiritual death in contrast to the state of life in Christ (John 5:24; Colossians 2:13; 1 John 3:14). And the word of God plainly reckons every accountable person as a sinner: ". . . for we before laid to the charge both of Jews and Greeks, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; . . . They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one: . . . for there is no distinction; for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:9,10,12,22,23); "But the scripture shut up all things under sin" (Galatians 3:22). No rational person can rightfully plead not guilty to the charge of sin. Whether he has sinned little or much, whatever the kinds of sin he has committed, he is a *sinner*, dead in his sins and thus devoid of the life that only Christ can give. As David Brown observed, "Though men differ greatly in the *nature* and *extent* of their sinfulness, there is absolutely no difference between the best and worst of men, in the *fact* that 'all have sinned,' and underlie the wrath of God."

Nature of Sin

It is not difficult to understand the desperate, urgent need all accountable men have of life in Christ when we realize their terrible, fearful plight in sin.

In sin they are lost. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). In their lost condition, sinners are portrayed by Jesus as "distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). See Luke 19:10; 1 Peter 2:25.

In sin they are separated from God. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2).

In sin they have "missed the mark," which is the precise meaning of word "sin" as it is mainly used in the New Testament. They have missed the mark in regard to the law of God. "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). They have missed the mark in regard to righteousness. "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). They have missed the mark in regard to the glory of God, who is altogether righteous. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

In sin they have set aside God and His will, to live in dependence on self. They are essentially self-centered rather than God-centered. The first human couple, Adam and Eve, succumbed to the temptation of the devil and sinned when they decided to do as they pleased rather than as God pleased. And this dependence on self rather than on God is the refusal to honor and glorify Him as God. That is the significance of Paul's indictment of sinful mankind in Romans 1:20-22, "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." See Romans 1:28-32.

In refusing to honor and glorify God, sinful man has glorified himself and his own works. This spirit of self-glorification is exemplified by Nebuchadnezzar. As he walked through his palace one day, he exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place, by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).

What is known as the new morality is not anything *new* at all. It is in reality the old immorality, the attitude that denies allegiance to any will and person other than one's own will and person. This so-called new morality dethrones God and enthrones self. Its slogan "doing one's own thing" simply means doing as one pleases, not as God pleases. Thus such a philosophy is completely in conflict with the Biblical concept of sin.

When we see how widespread this false philosophy is, we can well understand why modern society is in such a terrible, confused condition.

It is a society that has generally rejected God and His supreme right to rule in the lives of men. Our present society, on the brink of ruin, reminds us of an especially chaotic period in Jewish history, when it was said that “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6). The history of mankind has certainly repeated itself over and over again in man’s glorification of himself rather than of God. Contemporary society is sowing the wind in its rejection of God and His will; and if it continues on its present downward course, it will eventually reap the whirlwind in its own destruction.

Consequences of Sin

Men have always reaped as they have sown in regard to their sins (Galatians 6:7,8). Sin has always “received a just recompense of reward” (Hebrews 2:2). It is always eventually followed by some form of retribution. Whatever pleasure it brings can only be “for a season” (Hebrews 11:25). We see the painful, unhappy temporal consequences of sin everywhere: in crime, in wars, in poverty, in diseased, maimed, and broken bodies. But most significant of all, unless the sinner receives life in Christ, to be divinely forgiven, he faces the awful consequences of his sins in eternal death, to exist forever without God. “For the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). This death is described as “the wrath of God . . . revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Romans 1:18) and “the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). See 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

Deliverance from Sin

In their lost condition, separated from God, men are in spiritual darkness (Colossians 1:13), in spiritual bondage (Romans 6:6), and in spiritual sickness (Mark 2:17). But by divine grace through the saving power of Christ they can be returned to God, to be delivered out of their spiritual darkness, to be freed from their spiritual bondage, to be healed of their spiritual sickness. That is the wonderful message of hope held out to every sinner by the gospel, which we shall discuss further in the lesson to follow. For as powerful as sin is in the lives of men, God’s grace is more powerful—even as God Himself is more powerful than the devil. Those in sin need Christ because only He, the crucified, resurrected Saviour, can manifest the grace of God in overcoming the power of the devil in the lives of sinners. In His last public discourse before His death, Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world [Satan] be cast out” (John 12:31). Note also the following passages: “. . . that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14,15); “He that doeth sin is of the devil; for

the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

When Saul of Tarsus, later to become Paul the apostle, was stopped on the road to Damascus, he heard a voice which said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and *from the power of Satan unto God*, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:15-18).

Paul declared, ". . . where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20,21). Sin does indeed abound in the life of every sinner. The course of every sinner's life is downward and worse, not upward and better. But however deeply any sinner may sink into sin, no matter how unhappy the consequences of sin may be in his life, the grace of God through Christ has all power to deliver him from the guilt and influence of sin and to direct his steps in the way of life everlasting. That is the significance of the phrase "abound more exceedingly," which is translated from a single Greek word literally meaning "to be overabundant." It is used in only one other New Testament passage, 2 Corinthians 7:4, where the inspired writer says, "I *overflow* with joy in all our affliction." The grace of God is so overabundant, so overflowing, that sin must go down to defeat when any sinner accepts this grace by accepting Christ the Saviour. The advent of the gospel was indeed the advent of good news because it signified the defeat of sin in the lives of all who would accept this glorious message of God's grace in Christ.

Conviction of Sin

No matter how urgent and desperate the sinner's need of Christ is, he will not seek Him and His saving power unless he is convicted of the serious reality of sin in his life. Sick men do not seek medical help unless they are convinced of both the fact of their sickness and of the serious threat it holds to their physical welfare. And so it is that one suffering from the sickness of sin will not seek the divine and only cure for this most terrible of all diseases unless he realizes that he is a sinner and that his sins are not to be taken lightly, but that they are leading him to everlasting condemnation.

The conviction of sin is involved in the ministry of the Holy Spirit to sinners: "And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin . . ." (John 16:8). This convicting power of the Spirit can only be found in the revelation that He has inspired, the word of God. See Acts 2:36,37.

SALVATION IN CHRIST

The gospel, which is “the power of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16), reveals that the sole power to deliver men from the guilt and consequences of their sins is possessed by Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. “And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). See 1 Corinthians 1:30,31; 15:1-4.

Jesus saves! What glorious, stirring, and inspiring words are these—the greatest verity ever expressed! W. Clarkson appropriately declared, “Mankind had lost its way utterly, its way from the home of God, from the foundations of joy; was wandering, blind and miserable, in forbidden ways; was stumbling on the dark mountains of error and sin. And the Son of man came to seek this erring and lost race, to lead it back again, to restore it to its heritage in wisdom, in righteousness, to God.”

Jesus saves! “. . . and thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21); “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him” (John 3:16,17); “Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

Jesus saves! He saves by the redeeming, justifying, cleansing power of the blood He shed on the cross. “For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). “But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him” (Romans 5:8,9). “Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18,19). “. . . Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood” (Revelation 1:5).

Jesus has both the desire and power to save all men (Hebrews 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:3,4,6; 2 Peter 3:9), but that does not mean that all will be saved. Only those sinners who accept and appropriate the Lord’s salvation in the way set forth in the gospel will be saved.

Salvation Is Free

The salvation God gives men through Jesus Christ is free, expressive

of His grace, or unmerited favor. "For the wages of sin is death; but the *free gift* of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Since salvation is a free gift of God, according to His unmerited favor, it cannot be deserved or earned by man. The price of man's redemption has been fully paid at Calvary by the redeeming blood of Christ; thus the sinner can do nothing to earn salvation. The just penalty for his sins is death; and if he receives what he justly deserves, he will exist eternally in "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). But Jesus died in his stead, having met the just demands of law so that the sinner can find in Him the means of being cleared of all guilt and freed from the sentence of death. This is the great Bible doctrine of vicarious substitution: Jesus Christ becoming the sin-offering to meet the demands of divine justice against sin and to procure for the sinner the mercy of God in the forgiveness of his sins. Truly, divine justice and mercy at Calvary.

In this phase of our lesson, we must keep uppermost in our thoughts the atoning work of the sinless One as the meritorious basis of salvation from sin and not any work on our part. "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were entreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf: that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:20,21). "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us . . ." (Titus 3:5).

Those who seek God's favor on the basis of their own good works are doomed to utter failure. Law keeping, as such, has never saved any man. The demand of divine law is perfect obedience, which no human being has ever been able to do. Thus all men are sinners and under the curse of law. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Galatians 3:10).

Those who attempt to be saved by law keeping, by good works, would reckon salvation as a matter of debt rather than of grace, thus rejecting the sin-offering Jesus Christ, the only meritorious basis of salvation. "Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt" (Romans 4:4).

Every rational, accountable person must come to the realization that he has transgressed God's law, which is sin (1 John 3:4), and that nothing he can do has the merit to atone for a single sin he has ever committed. He must know that large sums of money given to charity, that many kind deeds and gracious acts of benevolence, cannot atone for even the least significant sin of which he is guilty. He must know that only by the merits and mercy of the perfect law-keeper Jesus Christ is there salvation.

Salvation Is by Faith

Since salvation is the free gift of God, thus not to be bought, earned, or deserved by the sinner, it must be appropriated or received, which is to be done by belief, or faith. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth* on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

"Be it know unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins: and by him every one that *believeth* is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39).

"And he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by *faith*" (Acts 15:9).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that *believeth*; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through *faith*, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing, I say, of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath *faith* in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26).

"Being therefore justified by *faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by *faith* into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1,2).

In continuing our study, we should plainly see that faith is not an arbitrary requirement; it is the only requirement God's perfect wisdom and integrity could possibly make as the means of the sinner's response to the sin-offering Christ in securing the benefits of His merits and grace in salvation from sin.

Justifying, saving faith has two aspects: belief in or mental assent to the fact of Jesus as the Saviour and trust in or dependence on Him for salvation.

Mental Assent Concerning Christ

Some passages dealing with faith, or belief, in this limited sense of giving recognition to Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Saviour are the following: "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21); "Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

Belief in the historical facts concerning Christ is the lowest common denominator of faith, the basis for this belief being the testimony of the divine word concerning Christ. See John 20:30,31; Romans 10:17. We can readily see the necessity of this phase of saving faith. No one would possibly seek salvation in Christ who does not mentally accept

the reality of His divinity and saving power. Sick men will not seek help from those whom they do not believe have the power to heal, and neither will men come to the Great Physician for freedom from the disease of sin unless they believe in His power to heal.

Trust in Christ

Although mental assent to the fact of Christ's divinity and saving power is primarily necessary for one to be saved, it does not bring salvation in and of itself alone. A sick person might believe in the power of a certain physician to cure him of a particular disease and still continue to suffer from that disease. It is only when he desires a cure, expressing his belief in the curative power of the physician by putting his trust in him, relying on his curative power, that a cure will be effected.

One might believe that a certain plane flies to a particular destination without himself ever reaching that destination. It is only after he has put his trust in the plane, relying on its transporting power by boarding it, that he will reach the destination to which it goes.

Indeed, Christ has all power to save, but that does not mean that all who believe in this sublime truth are saved. Only those whose belief in Him truly turns away from the love and practice of sin to trust in Him for salvation, who commit, surrender, and submit themselves to Him and His saving power, will be saved. But what is involved in the belief in the divinity and saving power of Christ that genuinely trusts in Him for salvation, which is justifying and saving faith? *Repentance* and *baptism*. In the last and great commission Jesus gave to His apostles, He spoke as follows: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19,20); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16); "Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures! and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luke 24:45-47).

Combining the information contained in these three accounts of the great commission, we observe that the central theme presented is salvation, or the remission of sins, and that the means of appropriating it is belief, repentance, and baptism. Obviously, the belief contemplated here is mental assent to the saving power of Christ, with repentance and baptism being the expression of this belief in trusting in the Lord for salvation. Saving, justifying faith, then, is belief, repentance, and baptism. When one believes that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and

Saviour, repents of his sins, and is baptized, he is then said to be justified by faith according to the teaching of God's holy word.

Repentance, as the word is used in the great commission and in similar passages, pertains to the change of mind concerning the practice of sin. It is naturally and logically part of saving faith. How can any one possibly even desire, much less appropriate, Christ's saving power from sin, if his mind is still inclined toward a life of sin? But when one who believes in Christ as the Saviour seriously and soberly contemplates the fact and enormity of sin in his life and the goodness of God in sending His divine Son to die for his sins, he feels godly sorrow for his sinful life. He then changes his mind or attitude toward sin, highly resolving to forsake his evil ways, to seek salvation in Christ, and to follow Him the rest of his days. See Romans 2:4 and 2 Corinthians 7:10.

Repentance is the mental phase of trust in the Lord for salvation, whereas baptism is the relying, submitting, surrendering phase. In the act of baptism, the immersion of the penitent believer's body in water, the sinner turns loose from self and gives his life to Christ in whom he believes. He thus identifies himself with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, to die to the old man of sin and to walk with the Lord in the new life of justification. "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection; knowing this, that our old man was crucified with him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin; for he that hath died is justified from sin" (Romans 6:3-7).

Further teaching on the fact of baptism as being inseparably part of saving, justifying faith is presented in Galatians 3:26,27, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many as you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." Those who deny that baptism is part of saving faith are prone to read the first sentence of this quotation and to overlook the latter. But verse 27 is a commentary on verse 26. It plainly states that justifying faith, such as makes men sons of God and puts them into Christ, includes baptism. Those believing in Christ, giving mental assent to His divinity and saving power, who refuse or fail to be baptized, have not repented of their sins and thus refuse or fail to truly trust in the Lord for salvation. See John 3:5; Acts 2:41; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:20,21.

In accepting the teaching of the New Testament concerning the relationship of baptism to salvation, we must clearly recognize that this ordinance is not the meritorious cause of salvation, but that it is involved in the kind of faith that expresses belief in Jesus Christ the Saviour and relies on His merits and the grace of God for salvation.

We shall now consider some further New Testament teaching concerning the conclusion that saving faith involves more than merely giving mental assent to the fact of the saving power of Christ, that it includes repentance and baptism. Acts 2:38 says, "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins. . . ." In Acts 10:43, Peter is recorded as saying, "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." Observe that in one passage the apostle affirms that remission of sins is received by those who repent and are baptized; in the other passage he mentions nothing but belief as the prerequisite for salvation. Is there a conflict between these passages? Not at all. Belief in Acts 10:43 is justifying faith; it includes repentance and baptism, expressly mentioned in Acts 2:38.

See Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:14; Acts 8:26-39; 16:25-34; 22:10,16.

COMMITMENT TO CHRIST (1)

One who has surrendered himself by trusting faith to Christ and the cross for salvation “walks in newness of life” (Romans 6:4), is a “new creature” in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), is reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:18,19), and is “born anew” (John 3:3-5). His life is now to be committed without reservation to Christ, as belonging to Him by right of purchase (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Titus 2:13,14; 1 Peter 1:18,19).

The Christ-life for the Self-life

Life in Christ is the substitution of the Christ-life for the self-life, the Christ-will for the self-will, so that Christ becomes the source of all the power for the Christian to live fruitfully and successfully in His service. That is exactly what Paul taught in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.”

It is man’s self-life, or self-will, that is the pivot of all his evil acts, the spot which is vulnerable to the attacks of Satan. But the Christian, who has committed and surrendered his life to Christ, has been “crucified with Christ,” uniting himself with the cross so that his self-life—his proud, fussy self-esteem—has been killed.

The death of the self-life at the cross is also affirmed in such passages as Galatians 5:24, “And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof”; Matthew 16:24, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

In leaving heaven to exist in the form of human flesh and to willingly die on the cross, Christ denied His divine self (Philippians 2:5-8). So the Christian must deny his sinful, fleshly self if he would have the power of the crucified, resurrected Saviour to live the Christian life.

In having the self-life destroyed at the cross, the Christian now makes Christ the all in all of his life so that he can say, “It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.” What is the Christian life? *The Christ-life substituted for the self-life, or Christ living in the Christian.* Any concept of the Christian life that fails to center on the fact of the indwelling Christ is totally foreign to the teaching of God’s holy word. The scriptural concept of Christ dwelling in the Christian is in essence the same as the Christian dwelling to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). In either case, Christ in the Christian or the Christian in Christ, the leading idea is that of the Christian’s subjection to Christ in all things, the commit-

ment of his entire life to Christ and His will. Cf. Romans 13:14; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:9,10.

We must note here that the fact of Christ dwelling in the Christian is equivalent to God the Father dwelling in the Christian. Thus to speak of Christ's power working in the Christian is equivalent to speaking of God's power working in the Christian. See John 14:23; 1 Peter 5:10. But since Jesus Christ is the Father's gift to us, our sole access to the Father (John 14:6), all gospel teaching concerning upright, fruitful, victorious living focuses on the influence, guidance, mediatorship, and power of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14. Thus the emphasis we are placing in this series of lessons on life in Christ is that of Christ dwelling in the Christian—the Christ-life substituted for the self-life.

Christ in the Christian! All truths concerning the wonderful life Christ imparts to the Christian are built upon this great foundation fact. *Christ in the Christian:* Christ guiding the Christian; Christ strengthening the Christian; Christ blessing the Christian; Christ's life becoming part and parcel of the Christian's life.

Whatever divinely ordained responsibilities the Christian has, whatever the divine help, example, succor he receives, all will have to come through the Christ who dwells in him, whose life has become his life. The Lord declared, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). See Matthew 17:5; Hebrews 1:1,2. Paul said, ". . . Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. . . . But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:24,30,31). It is necessary for one to depend on Christ for freedom from sin and membership in His body, the church; and now that he has become a Christian he must rely on Christ for everything he needs to make his life full, happy, and fruitful.

Verily, the self-life is a weak, frail life, but the Christ-life is a strong life. The self-life is a carnal life, but the Christ-life is a spiritual life. The self-life is a sterile life, but the Christ-life is a fruitful life.

Carefully study the following passages which deal with the indispensable presence of Christ in making possible the victorious life in Him:

"Abide in me [Christ], and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for *apart from me ye can do nothing*" (John 15:4,5).

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

“For to me to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21).

“I can do all things in him [Christ] that strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

“For in him [Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in him ye are made full, who is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:9,10).

Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

When one becomes a child of God, a Christian, having his past sins remitted in the blood of Christ, he receives the Holy Spirit as a divine gift. “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). “And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6). See 1 Thessalonians 4:3.

The Christ-life, the opposite of a life dominated by sin, is not possible without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. “And hereby we know that he [Christ] abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us” (John 3:24). “For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:5-11).

The foregoing quotation from the Roman letter plainly affirms that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, having the Spirit of Christ, belonging to Christ, and having Christ in us, are all varied expressions of the same great fact, and that the spiritual life we receive from Christ is not possible without the indwelling of the Spirit. See Ephesians 3:14-21; Romans 8:13.

In considering the fact of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, let us constantly be aware of the great truth that He makes Jesus Christ a living, bright, edifying, saving reality to us. The work of the Holy Spirit is indeed Christ-centered, Christ-exalting. Our Lord predicted concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit into the world: “He shall bear witness of me” (John 15:26); “He shall glorify me” (John 16:14). These predictions are fulfilled in the revelation of the Spirit, the New Testament scriptures. In them the Spirit gives Jesus Christ the preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18), depicting Him as man’s only access to

God (Ephesians 2:18; 1 Timothy 2:5). The mind of the Spirit as revealed in the divine writ presents the meritorious work of Christ for us as the central fact of the Bible. When we "mind the things of the Spirit," we mind the things of Christ whom the Spirit has revealed to us in the sacred scriptures. Not only has the Spirit given us the inspired scriptures, but His presence in our lives gives us the power to guard this divinely revealed message (2 Timothy 1:13, 14).

The person of the indwelling Holy Spirit participates in the providential care of God in our lives by the assistance He gives us in our prayers. "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered; and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is in the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:26, 27). In so helping us in our prayers, the Spirit still glorifies Christ, who by token of His sacrifice on Calvary gives access to the "throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help us in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of faithful Christians is most assuredly a basis for deep gratitude on their part; for both in the testimony of the sacred scriptures and in divine providence, He keeps Christ uppermost in their hearts, affections, and thoughts, glorifying Him as the alpha and omega of their spiritual lives.

Pleasing Christ

Since the life surrendered to Christ at the cross is the substitution of the Christ-will for the self-will, the Christian life is one of seeking to please Christ and not self. "We keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22). See 2 Timothy 2:3,4; Matthew 23:20; 2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 John 4:6. The faithful Christian's will is in subjection to Christ's will. He realizes that his life is no longer to be lived in ways that would please the selfish, carnal nature, but that since it has been purchased, redeemed, by Christ, it now belongs to Him and thus is to be used in His service, to His glory.

The loyal Christian can truly say, "Lord, thou hast given thy life for me, and now I give my life to thee; by grace the great exchange is made."

Loving Christ

One in whom Christ abides does not consider anything enjoined upon him by his divine Master as being a grievous burden, an irksome duty. He follows Christ because he *wants* to, and he *wants* to because he *loves* Christ. His trusting faith in and love for Christ are inseparable. The former cannot exist without the latter. A reasonable way of combining the two would be to speak in terms of loving, trusting faith.

Unbounding divine love is the initiating force behind the gift of salvation received by one who has surrendered his life to Christ, and in the Christian life to follow there is the reciprocating of love. "We love, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). When the Christian seriously contemplates the magnitude of the blessing of redemption he enjoys in Christ, he cannot but feel a deep, warm gratitude toward his great Benefactor. It is this loving gratitude that gives him the motivating force to render obedience to Christ. He does not subject himself to the will of Christ out of fear, out of any feeling of reluctant necessity, but by the compelling force of his love for Him. Consider the following passages:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23).

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14,15).

The love the faithful Christian has for Christ is stronger than the love he has for any one else or even for his own life. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it" (Matthew 10:37-39). Thus it is that Christ comes first in the life of the faithful Christian. His deep, rich love for Christ, involved in his submissive, trusting faith, makes it possible for him to follow the divine injunction, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33).

COMMITMENT TO CHRIST (2)

Exalting Christ

In striving to finally reach heaven by rendering faithful service to Christ, the loyal Christian does not consider the Christian life as the means of earning, achieving, or deserving heavenly salvation. True it is that Jesus is "unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9). The purpose, however, of the Christian's obedience is not to earn eternal salvation, but to maintain a living faith in Christ that he might reach heaven by the merits of Christ. Without obedience it is impossible to have a living faith. See James 2:14-26. Notice especially verses 17 and 26, "Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself . . . For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

By all means, the faithful Christian sees the need of working for the Lord, of rendering obedience to him; but he knows that after he has done all that he can in Christ's service, he still does not possess the personal merit to deserve eternal salvation. He must depend on the grace of God through the merits of Christ to take him safely through life and finally to his heavenly home. By divine power wrought through the cross he has become a Christian, and by this same power he lives the Christian life and receives eternal salvation in heaven. See Romans 6:22,23; 2 Timothy 2:1; Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 13-16. All faithful Christians can sincerely speak the words of Galatians 6:14, "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Life in Christ, the Christian life, which is made possible by the power of Christ, exalts Christ and not self.

Christless Lives

How unlike truly converted persons, in whom Christ dwells and who are continuing to glorify Him by maintaining loving, trusting faith in Him, are unconverted, uncommitted souls who vainly consider themselves as true Christians. Such persons do not exalt Christ by depending on His strength and guidance, but they seek to live the Christian life by their own strength alone. To them, Christianity is a cold intellectual concept, a set of rules and regulations to be obeyed out of a hard-bitten sense of duty. It is not a sense of loving loyalty to Christ, of unselfish devotion to Him, that causes them to nominally fulfill certain requirements for the Christian life, but rather a warped infatuation with Christianity as a doctrinal system. They are not concerned about what Christ would have them do, but what the "doctrine" requires of them. Their lives are doctrine or rule-centered rather than Christ-centered.

They assume an attitude of pride in that they have "obeyed the truth."

But in all their remarks concerning their religious life, they stress what they have done rather than what the Lord has done, their obedience rather than God's grace. They would leave the impression that they deserve the salvation they claim to have received, as if obedience to the truth is meritorious within itself. Such supremely important words associated with the power of Christ as "grace," "mercy," and "blood" are almost foreign to their religious vocabulary. They do not have any valid idea as to what it means to have Christ and the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, the dynamic of the fruitful Christian life. They have "a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:5). They are most fearful of the possibility of going to hell, but not very desirous of going to heaven. Needless to say, Christ does not dwell in their unloving hearts, and their lives are doomed to a terrible failure. "If any man loveth not the Lord, let him be anathema" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

Imitating Christ

The faithful Christian, who allows Christ to dwell in him, to sustain and direct his life, is aware that his goal in this present world is to reproduce in his life the life of Christ, to imitate the Lord's thoughts, attitudes, words, and deeds. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). "For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). "Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). Cf. Matthew 11:29; 1 Corinthians 11:1.

In the Christ-life substituted for the self-life, every *fact* in the life of Christ is intended to be a *factor* in the life of the Christian. The Lord's example is the revelation of perfect manhood, the manifestation of what Christians are intended to be. Conduct is the expression of character, character is the result of goodness, and goodness is the outcome of continued familiarity and contact with the perfect example of Christ. Indeed, the basic purpose of Christ dwelling in the Christian is to change him from one who has been conformed to the world to one who is transformed into the likeness of his perfect example. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory unto glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Life in Christ is the Christlike life.

Spiritual Growth

One does not become like Christ in a large measure immediately on surrendering his life to Him. He begins his life in Christ as a spiritual babe and not as a full-grown child of God. Only by a day after day walking in the footsteps of Christ will he become more and more like Him.

The Christian life is essentially a process of growth to spiritual maturity and thus of final salvation in heaven. It is a process of growth whereby the Christian progressively gains greater powers of spiritual discrimination and discernment so that he can distinguish between right and wrong.

Whatever attributes of Christ the Christian possesses at the beginning of his discipleship, he will possess in greater measure as he grows and matures in the Christian life. Then, too, in growing as a Christian, he will take on those attributes of Christ which he did not possess as a spiritual babe. There can never be any state of suspended animation, of standing still, in the Christian life. No resting on the accomplishments of the past! It is either the case of going forward, of growing in Christ, of becoming more like Him, or the case of stagnating and dying spiritually.

Some important New Testament quotations bearing out the foregoing comments and stressing the necessity and significance of growth in the Christian life are the following:

“. . . the building up of the body of Christ: till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-15).

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent” (Philippians 1:9,10).

“Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection” (Hebrews 6:1).

“As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation” (1 Peter 2:2).

It is indeed sad to contemplate those Christians who never grow beyond spiritual babyhood, who are still spiritual babes many years after their birth into God’s family. How quickly they removed themselves from the grace and power of Christ, thus to put themselves in jeopardy of being eternally lost! Cf. Galatians 1:6. Such persons are contemplated in the following passages: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able” (1 Corinthians 3:1,2); “For when by reason of time ye ought to be teachers ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Blessings

The life committed to Christ involves not only responsibilities to be met by faith and love, but, just as important, blessings to be enjoyed. It is by faithfully answering the call of obedience to Christ that the loyal Christian, who depends on the grace and power of Christ, enjoys the blessings of the Christian life.

In Christ Jesus he enjoys every spiritual blessing. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). He shares in "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). The Greek word translated here as "unsearchable" occurs but once elsewhere in the New Testament, in Romans 11:33, where the writer, after referring to the depth of God's riches, describes his ways as "past tracing out." This is the literal rendering of the word. Christ's riches are like a track that cannot be explored, like a mine whose treasures are inexhaustible, like a fountain whose waters eternally gush forth. Earthly treasures can be traced out, their value and extent fully comprehended; for example, the amount of goods in a storehouse, the sum of money in a bank account, the fair market value of real property, or the size of a parcel of land. But any attempt to measure, "to trace out," the inexhaustible riches of Christ is as futile as the attempt to measure the sky by the span of the fingers or to empty the ocean by spoonsful. Whatever the Christian's needs may be, whether spiritual or physical, he can know of a certainty that his heavenly high priest Jesus Christ will supply his every need when he maintains loyalty to Him. "And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

The basic blessing the Christian enjoys in Christ is the peace that comes from having his old, past, alien sins forgiven and to stand in the grace of God. "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1,2). Not only has God's grace through the blood of Christ cleansed him from his alien sins, but it also continually cleanses him from the sins he commits along the way as he continues to stand in God's grace by essentially living a faithful life. That is the import of 1 John 1:7-9, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

This wonderful realization the Christian has of having all his past and present sins forgiven gives him the blessed assurance that he is on the Lord's side and on his way to heaven. Since his is a truly committed life, he can confidently apply the words of Paul to himself: "I know him whom

I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him against that day” (2 Timothy 1:12).

The call of divine grace to life in Christ is not to a troubled and fearful heart, but to a peaceful and fearless heart. And God’s grace, which can perpetually maintain one’s life in Christ, has the power to keep his heart always filled with His wonderful peace. *No one stands in the grace of God who does not have peace with God and the blessed assurance of being continually saved.* The realization of divine grace in one’s life and the frustration caused by the bondage of sin are diametrically opposed to each other.

The blessed Lord declared, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful” (John 14:27); “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). Paul exultantly exclaimed, “Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your forbearance be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:4-7).

Jesus declared, “I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The New English Bible renders this passage as, “I have come that men may have life, and may have it in its fullness.” Sinners who blatantly boast of “living it up,” of enjoying life to the very hilt, cannot possibly, remotely comprehend what it means to *really* live, to live life in all its fullness. Yet the principal argument they make against the religion of Christ is that it offers a less abundant life than theirs. How utterly wrong they are! To the question, “Is life really worth living?,” the faithful Christian can give a resounding, “Yea, verily!” Having escaped from the corruption of the world, he enjoys all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3,4).

The superabundance of the blessings of a life committed to Christ is beautifully described in Ephesians 3:20, “Now unto him that is able to do *exceedingly abundantly* above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” When the Christian seriously contemplates the exceeding abundance of the life he enjoys in Christ, his sense of personal unworthiness makes him realize that he receives from the divine bounty far more than he can ever possibly deserve, so that he can exclaim in the words of David, “My cup runneth over” (Psalms 23:5). See Proverbs 3:9,10; Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:38; Ephesians 6:8.

BIBLE STUDY

Study of the Bible is a basic prerequisite for becoming like Christ since all the authentic information concerning Him is revealed in the sacred scriptures. How, then, can any one possibly become like Christ who does not know what Christ is like?

It takes love of the truth, as of Christ Himself, to become a child of God, a Christian; and it takes the same love of truth to become like Christ, who is the living embodiment of truth (John 14:6). See 2 Thessalonians 2:10. Jesus declared, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Those of God's children who genuinely love the truth, hungering after its righteous precepts, will diligently apply themselves to the study of the holy word. But those whose love for Christ and His will has grown cold will neglect Bible study, a certain indication that Christ no longer dwells in them.

In considering the importance of Bible study, the Christian will give due attention to the following pertinent passages: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32); "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3); "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Life in Christ, as we have already noted, is a process of spiritual growth. But one can no more live and grow spiritually without imbibing spiritual food than he can live and grow physically without imbibing physical food. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). See John 6:33.

In stressing the necessity of Bible study, we are not merely referring to Bible *reading* as such. Many so-called daily Bible *readers* dismally fail to come to an understanding of God's will. They may read the Bible day in and day out, but they do not intelligently, sincerely, diligently study and investigate its divine truths; hence, they fail to truly understand the divine will. All Bible reading, then, should be done in the spirit of careful *study* and *investigation*, always pointing to the goal of understanding, so that our lives may be ordered in keeping with the will of God. If any text in this lesson might be considered as the leading exhortation, it could well be Ephesians 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."

Divisions of the Bible

In "handling aright the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15), among other things an understanding of the divisions of the Bible is essential.

The two main divisions of the Bible are the Old and New Testaments. There are various ways of dividing the Old Testament, one of which is expressed by Jesus in Luke 24:44, “. . . the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms . . .” This was the common Hebrew way of dividing the Old Testament: *the law of Moses* to include the five books of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; *the prophets* to include the books of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve smaller books from Daniel to Malachi; *the psalms* to include Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Another way of dividing the Old Testament is to consider it in terms of dispensations: the patriarchal and the Jewish. The patriarchal dispensation, so-called, began with the creation of man. Under this dispensation God dealt directly with mankind; there were no written laws. The worship of God was carried on by each family under the leadership of the father, or patriarch. The Bible gives many examples of God’s direct dealing with man under this dispensation in covenants He made with various individuals: with Adam and Eve (Genesis 1:28-30), with Noah (Genesis 6:13-22; 9:8-17), with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17), etc.

Approximately fifteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, God made a covenant at Mount Sinai with the Jews through the mediatorship of Moses. This covenant is called “the law of Moses” (Nehemiah 8:1), “the law of God” (Nehemiah 8:8), and “the law” (Isaiah 42:21). In the strictest sense, this law is synonymous with the Old Testament. See Hebrews 8:7,8; 9:15-22.

The law of Moses was given to one people only, fleshly Israel. See Deuteronomy 5:1. It was to last until the establishment of the New Testament. See Galatians 3:19,24,25; Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:9,10.

The books of the Old Testament written after the giving and transcribing of the law of Moses were not additions to this law, but historical, devotional, and prophetic in nature.

The most important thing we must keep in mind in our study of the Old Testament is that it pointed to and focused on Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. Before the Lord’s ascension into heaven, following His resurrection, He said to His apostles, “These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44). He further declared, referring to the Old Testament scriptures, “Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me” (John 5:39).

In studying the New Testament, we must keep in mind its proper divisions and their relationship to the salvation and spiritual growth of man.

The first four books—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—are often called the gospels. In telling us about the Lord's miracles, death, and resurrection, they give us the necessary information to produce faith in Him as the Saviour of men. See John 20:30,31. The great commission, recorded in Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; and Luke 24:47, informs the Lord's disciples about the supreme authority of Christ and the necessity of preaching the gospel to all men. In it are given instructions to sinners about how to receive salvation in Christ. The gospels also deal with basic spiritual truths taught by Christ, and they present His earthly life as the pattern for our lives.

The next book in the New Testament is The Acts. This book tells of the establishment of the church of Christ and of historical facts concerning the trials and work of this divinely organized body during the first few years of its existence. It has been appropriately called the book of conversions, for it reveals concrete cases of the gospel being preached to sinners, turning them from sin and condemnation to righteousness and salvation.

Following The Acts are the twenty-one New Testament epistles, Romans through Jude, which deals with matters pertaining to the organization, work, and worship of the Lord's church. They also discuss the basic problems and difficulties Christ's disciples face as they live in a world of sin. Then, too, they instruct Christians concerning the Christlike life and the life that follows in the afterworld.

Two classifications are generally made of the epistles: 1. *The epistles of Paul*—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and possibly Hebrews (the authorship of which is not named, although generally attributed to Paul). Some of Paul's epistles were written to congregations; for example, 1 and 2 Corinthians. Others were addressed to individuals; for example, 1 and 2 Timothy. 2. *The general epistles*—James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. These epistles are described as general because they were not directed to any specific congregations or individuals, but to Christians in general.

The last book in the New Testament is Revelation. Written mainly in symbolic language, it describes the trials facing the early church and events which would "shortly come to pass" (Revelation 1:1). It also tells us about the glories of our future home in heaven.

Some Directions for Bible Study

Because of the limitation of space, we cannot deal with all the directions, or rules, for Bible study. Some of the more basic ones are the following:

1. *Study the Bible daily (Acts 17:11)*. In order to supply healthful nourishment to our bodies, it is required that we regularly eat good food in sufficient quantities. The same rule applies to the nourishment of our souls. We must imbibe the living bread, the word of Christ, regularly,

which means daily. And we must imbibe sufficient quantities of it. We should set aside enough time every day of our lives to study a reasonable portion of the sacred scriptures.

2. *Study the Bible systematically (Luke 24:27)*. Do not read the holy word at random—a chapter here and a chapter there, a verse here and a verse there. Have a definite, constructive, sensible plan of study—and stay with it! Do not study just a few favorite texts, but study *all* the divine word (it takes the *complete* revelation of truth to make the *complete* Christian). Be certain, also, that your plan includes studying the Bible consecutively as well as topically. Constantly pursue a course of study that takes you consecutively from the first verse of Genesis through the last verse of Revelation. Such a course of study is essential in developing an understanding of the over-all picture and purpose of the divine plan.

Your plan of study should, by all means, also include memorization of certain key scriptures. Passages memorized, all other things being equal, are passages which are most meaningful to us. Passages memorized also make it possible for us to more ably follow the injunction of 1 Peter 3:15, "But sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear."

3. *Study the Bible to know Christ, to become like Him, and to obey Him (Luke 6:46-49)*. Mere factual knowledge of the word cannot contribute to spiritual growth. The objective of all our Bible study must be to become like Christ—in word, thought, and deed—to put our knowledge of Him and His will into practice. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves. For if any one is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a mirror: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But he that looketh into the perfect law of the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing" (James 1:22-25).

4. *Complete information on the subject*. A very necessary rule in "handling aright the word of truth" is that no valid conclusion can be made about any Bible subject until all the divine testimony concerning it has been collected. Too often in our Bible study we are prone to read a single passage pertaining to a particular subject and feel that we possess all that needs to be known about it.

Many wrong religious practices and doctrines are the result of the failure of men to secure complete information on certain Bible subjects before drawing conclusions concerning their meaning. For example, an illiberal giver will attempt to justify his wrong practice by claiming that his giving is precisely in keeping with the teaching of 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." Yes, such a person will put into the collection plate a very small, insignificant

portion of his total income on the Lord's day, boldly declaring, "I put in what I have purposed to give, in a cheerful, ungrudging manner; hence, I have fulfilled my obligation to give according to the will of God." But is the sum total of Bible teaching concerning giving expressed in 2 Corinthians 9:7? By no means! True, we are to give as we have purposed in our hearts, in a cheerful spirit; but there are many Bible passages, presenting both precept and example, which enjoin on us liberal giving and condemn illiberal giving. Before one can know what his responsibility is in the matter of giving, he must collect all the divine testimony on the subject. Cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15.

5. *Study the Bible to teach others (2 Timothy 2:24)*. Not only should we study the Bible to edify ourselves, to become like Christ, but also to help others. As we constantly, systematically study the sacred scriptures, we should be thinking about telling others the glad tidings of Christ. We cannot be selfish about our understanding of divine truth and please the Lord. We must pass this understanding on to others as we incite them to study the Bible and come to a saving knowledge of Christ.

EVERYDAY RIGHTEOUSNESS (1)

In this phase of our discussion, we shall devote special attention to righteous living, life in Christ, in the daily walks of life.

One who becomes a child of God, a Christian, is sanctified; that is, he is set apart for the service of the Lord. "Ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). As one who is sanctified, his body is devoted to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), to be kept clean, pure, and upright. Before his conversion to Christ, his life was devoted and enslaved to sin; but now that he is a Christian, having been redeemed by Christ, his life is to be devoted to righteousness. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein? . . . Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (Romans 6:1,2,12,13). "Ye were brought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:20). See Ephesians 2:8-10; Colossians 1:10; Titus 2:11-14.

Sufficient Grace

The New Testament plainly teaches that the grace of God that saves men from their sins also gives them the power to abound in good works. "And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work: as it is written, He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the poor; His righteousness abideth for ever. And he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness: ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving unto God" (2 Corinthians 9:8-11).

The power of God to see us through in doing His will in all the walks of life is also expressed in Philippians 1:6, ". . . he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." Indeed, the apostle not only attributes the perfection of a good work through God, but also its very inception. Every good work the Christian does, from its very beginning to its very end, is empowered by the grace of God. Thus his boast of the good he accomplishes can never be of himself but only of God. See Philippians 2:13.

Example of Christ

The perfect example of righteous living, of course, is Jesus Christ, the

sinless One. To live righteously, then, is to follow the pattern of His wonderful life, to diligently strive to imitate His spotless character. "But like as he who called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written, Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15,16).

Any discussion concerning righteous living, the building of Christian character, must emphasize the character traits of our perfect example. Carefully consider the following: holy (Acts 4:27), just (John 5:30), guileless (1 Peter 2:22), sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21), spotless (1 Peter 1:19), innocent (Matthew 27:4), resisting temptation (Matthew 4:1-10), obedient to God the Father (John 15:10), subject to His parents (Luke 2:51), zealous (Luke 2:49), meek (Matthew 11:29), lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29), merciful (Hebrews 2:17), patient (Matthew 27:14), longsuffering (1 Timothy 1:16), compassionate (Matthew 15:32), benevolent (Matthew 4:23,24), loving (John 13:1), self-denying (Matthew 8:20), humble (Luke 22:27), resigned (Luke 22:42), and forgiving (Luke 23:34).

Love for Mankind

Righteous living involves not only a correct attitude toward the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, but also toward one's fellow men. We have already stressed the necessity of deeply and richly loving God in order to acceptably obey His commands and to live fruitfully in His service. But one cannot possibly love God unless he truly, warmly loves his fellow men. "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:7,8,20,21). See Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 1:22.

One's love for his fellow men must include in its ennobling, uplifting scope not only his friends, family, and Christian brethren, but also his enemies. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies. . . . For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:43,44,46). Our perfect example did not limit His love merely for His friends, but for His enemies as well, best exemplified by His prayer on Calvary for those guilty of crucifying Him: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Love for mankind must truly embrace *all* men, both friend and foe, regardless of their nationality, race, political party, social and economic standing, etc. See Luke 10:25-37. It was this love for *all* men that caused our Saviour to "taste of death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). In following His example, we will obey the injunction of Ephesians 5:2, "Walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for

us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell." See John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8. Carefully read all of 1 Corinthians 13.

Jesus Christ, whose being is the very essence of divine love, will not abide in any heart wherein are hate, rancor, and bitterness. For one to walk and live with Christ, then, he must prayerfully cultivate an attitude of loving, warmhearted appreciation for the inestimable worth of every human being, regardless of who or what he may be.

Genuine love for men is the spirit of unselfishness of Jesus Christ, who divested Himself of heavenly glory, honor, and joy to come to the world and give the last measure of devotion in the service of mankind. "Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:4-8).

Christian Influence

Christlike love can never be selfish, for "love seeketh not its own" (1 Corinthians 13:5). The faithful Christian continually maintains a reverent awareness that everyday righteousness is meant not only to please Christ and benefit oneself, but that it is also to benefit others. His love for others embodies unselfish concern for their rights. "Let no man seek his own, but each his neighbor's good" (1 Corinthians 10:24). He abstains from evil and does good because there is more at stake than his own eternal welfare, even the eternal welfare of others. Thus he heeds the advice of Paul, "Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: even as I also please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved" (1 Corinthians 10:32,33). He avoids anything and everything that would cause others to stumble. He recognizes that his life is to exemplify the life of Jesus in order that it may bring to men a realization of the great truth that the Christian life is the best possible way of living in this world, thus encouraging them to come to Christ. As he labors zealously to be like Christ, to live a godly, righteous life, he is constantly saying in action, if not in words, "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). His entire dedicated, fruitful, happy life becomes a recommendation to others of the Christlike way of life. "Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a bushel, but on the stand; and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

Right Thinking

Upright, righteous living involves both negative and positive aspects: abstaining from evil and doing good. "For, He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil" (1 Peter 3:10-12). "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world . . . zealously of good works" (Titus 2:11-14). See James 1:27; 2 Corinthians 7:1.

In considering both the negative and positive aspects of righteous living, we cannot stress too strongly the importance of a person's thinking, the condition of his heart, or mind. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). ". . . out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34).

It is axiomatic, then, that if the Christian would live a Christlike life, he must be Christlike in his thinking. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). See 1 Corinthians 2:16. If our thinking is evil, our speech and actions will be evil; but if we think as Christ did, hating evil and loving good, then our lives will be righteous.

Since evil doing is the result of evil thinking (Matthew 5:27,28; 15:18-20; James 3:14-16), he who would live a godly life must strive to maintain purity of heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Love, the principal quality of Christian character, "taketh not account of evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5).

Avoiding Evil

As the faithful Christian strives to avoid all the sins of the mind, he is careful to avoid the overt transgressions resulting from them. He shuns all evil speaking. "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth" (Ephesians 4:29). He shuns all evil doing. "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). There are many references in the word of Christ that specify the things from which Christians are to abstain. The reader is requested to give special attention to the study of the following passages: 1 Corinthians 6:9,10; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:25-28; 5:3-6; 1 Peter 2:1.

Not only are such sins as drunkenness, lying, covetousness, stealing, etc. specified in the foregoing scriptures, but also the following sins: *fornication*, carnal knowledge in general; *adultery*, breaking the marriage vow by the specific act of fornication, or by carnal knowledge of a person not one's lawful spouse; *hypocrisy*, pretending to be what one is not, and not showing what he is; *lasciviousness*, wanton acts or manners,

as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of one of the opposite sex: *jealousy*, an envious and contentious rivalry; *envy*, pain, uneasiness, mortification or discontent, excited by another's prosperity, accompanied with some degree of hatred, and often with a desire or an effort to depreciate the person, and with pleasure in seeing him depressed; *uncleanness*, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living.

Doing Good

Maintaining a heart and life free from evil is not alone sufficient in living the Christian life. In the final analysis, God's children are not reckoned as being faithful to Christ solely in terms of what they refrain from doing, but in terms of what they *do*. Life abhors a vacuum. If one merely casts out sinful thoughts from his mind and refrains from committing overt acts of evil, yet fails to fill his mind and life with positive goodness, the spiritual emptiness created by his negative attitude toward Christian living will eventually be filled with evil, if not with certain sins of immorality, most certainly with such sins as sullenness, covetousness, self-righteousness, etc.

In living a life of positive goodness, the Christian must rely on the power of positive thinking. He must not only refrain from evil thoughts, but he must be positive in thinking on good (Philippians 4:8).

Yes, the thinking of the Christian must be directed toward the overt doing of good in his life, for when he believes he is living the Christian life merely because he refrains from such sins as drunkenness, stealing, cursing, etc., he is in the greatest possible danger of making shipwreck of his faith and falling from the grace of God. There is no sin more dangerous to the Christian than negligence. See James 4:17. We strongly emphasize that it is not enough that the Christian should refrain from corrupt speaking, but that he should also speak words that will "give grace to them that hear" (Ephesians 4:29); it is not enough that he should turn away from evil, but that he should also do good (1 Peter 3:11); it is not enough that the tree which his life represents should be free from evil fruit, but that it should be filled with good fruit (Matthew 7:16-19).

To keep the devil and sin from controlling us, we must be so busily engaged in positive acts of goodness that there will be neither the place nor the time for evil to prevail in our lives. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

The Christian's overt doing of good is definitely tied to the graces of Christian character. One will not do good who does not cultivate these graces. A list of these graces is presented in 2 Peter 1:5-7, which the reader is requested to carefully study: "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your

self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Faith, or trust, is logically presented as the first of these graces since it is the beginning of correct relations with Christ and the very breath of the Christian life. A Christian only lives as long as he keeps his trust. Love is listed last because it is the complete crown of the Christian life, as faith is the start and source. The love contemplated here is for God and all mankind. Notice the basic meaning of the graces listed between faith and love.

Virtue, moral courage or stability which brings on a sense of sufficiency for every good work, the conscious strength that come from firm, established Christian principle; *knowledge*, not mere *head-knowledge*, but *life-knowledge*, wisdom, or moral discernment, practical discernment of good and evil, intelligent appreciation of what is the will of Christ in each detail of practice; *self-control*, mastery over one’s lusts, desires, and passions, keeping everything about one’s life confined within its proper limits; *patience*, bearing all trials and difficulties with a peaceful mind, enduring in all, and persevering in all; *godliness*, continual sense of the presence of God in Christ, adoring, loving, and magnifying Him in the heart; *brotherly kindness*, love of one’s brothers and sisters in Christ, the strongest feeling of attachment to Christ’s disciples, feeling each as a member of one’s own body. See Galatians 5:22-24.

EVERYDAY RIGHTEOUSNESS (2)

Helping Our Fellow Men

It is in the realm of human relationships that the Christian operates in the service of God. Let us never forget that the good we render the Lord, apart from our direct obeisance to Him in worship, is the good we render human beings. See Acts 17:25. Indeed, God refuses to accept our worship unless we maintain honorable, decent, loving relationships with our fellow men. "If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23,24).

All men are included in the scope of those who are objects of Christian service, even as all men are the objects of our love. "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). See Romans 12:20.

In our daily contacts with men there arise many different situations that demand our attention, even situations about which no detailed information is given in the New Testament. However, the guiding principles of the New Testament cover all the situations which arise between the Christian and his fellow men, the basic rule being: "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). If the Christian will faithfully, lovingly, intelligently follow this rule in all his dealings with men, he will only do them good, never harm.

In doing good to men and thus exalting Christ, Christians are committed to at least the following basic responsibilities:

1. *Helping the weak, sick, and needy.* In a sense, every man, because of the limitations imposed upon him by the fallible flesh in which he dwells, is weak and frail, standing in the need of assistance; hence the exhortation: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). Even the best of Christians in unguarded moments are overtaken in sin and need guidance, counsel, and encouragement from their brethren. See Galatians 6:1.

There are exigent cases of physical want and sickness that demand the special attention of faithful Christians. When such cases come to our attention, there is just one basic responsibility we are to fulfill, and that is to meet the need with liberality, cheerfulness, and kindness. "But whoso hath the world's goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

One of the reasons given for the Christian's responsibility of being

intense and diligent in attending to the affairs of his business is that "he may have whereof to give to him that hath need" (Ephesians 4:28).

Yes, faithful Christians must supply the needs of the sick, imprisoned, hungry, thirsty, and naked as they have the opportunity to do so. Read carefully Matthew 25:35-40. The very essence of pure religion, including the abstaining from evil, is the extending of a helping hand to those who are in want: "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Jesus Christ, our perfect example, expressed the very essence of His character when He "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Let us do likewise. See Matthew 20:28.

2. *Forgiving.* The spirit of Christlike forgiveness prevails in the life of the loyal Christian. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). When we have been sinned against, we are to do everything within our power to bring the one who has wronged us to repentance; and, if he repents, we are to grant him full and complete forgiveness (Luke 17:3). See Matthew 18:15-17. To refuse to grant forgiveness to those who have sinned against us is to fail to receive God's forgiveness of our trespasses against Him. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15). See James 2:13.

It should, however, be urged in this connection that the Christian who sins against another is bound to do his part in rectifying the wrong by going to the one he has wronged and asking for his forgiveness (Matthew 5:23,24).

3. *Leading men to Christ.* Not all Christians are qualified to publicly proclaim the gospel, but every Christian is responsible to use whatever abilities he possesses in leading men to Christ, in being a soul winner for the Saviour. The very spirit of Christian benevolence and liberality demands this. The Christian has been saved by the power of The Saviour's blood and given a place in His kingdom, and now he unselfishly wants all men to enjoy these same blessings. See John 1:40-42. For one to neglect the responsibility of leading men to Christ, and thus making heaven possible for them, is to fail in making heaven possible for himself.

As we previously pointed out in this discussion, Christians are to lead godly lives in order to influence others to come to God through Christ. See Matthew 5:16. But men cannot believe and obey Christ unless they receive the teaching of the gospel (John 6:45; Romans 10:17), and it is the responsibility of Christians to see that they receive this teaching. Thus the loyal Christian uses every proper means at his disposal to teach men about Christ. If he is so qualified, he preaches and teaches publicly, as well as privately. If he is not qualified to publicly preach or teach, he does personal work in leading men to a saving knowledge of the

gospel, teaching them in private and encouraging them to attend services where they can hear the gospel proclaimed. See Acts 18:26.

Not only are Christians to labor diligently to bring to Christ those who have never received His salvation, but also those of His disciples who have been overtaken in sin. See Galatians 6:1; James 5:19,20.

The Christian Home

There is no phase of daily life where it is more important for Christ to reign in the lives of His disciples than in the home, or family. It is in the home that people live together in life's most intimate relationships. Where homes are Christ-centered, with love, peace, understanding, and mutual sympathy prevailing, the Lord is glorified and human lives are strengthened to meet the strains and stresses of a materialistic world. But where homes are not Christ-centered, with strife and hatred prevailing, there is fertile ground for producing delinquent children and unhappy, frustrated men and women. Therefore, too much emphasis cannot be placed on the responsibilities of Christian husbands and wives to each others, of parents to their children, and of children to their parents.

If the members of any family will accept their basic responsibilities as follows, they will do their part in maintaining a home that is truly Christian: "But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself up for it" (Ephesians 5:24,25); ". . . women to love their husbands, to love their children" (Titus 2:4); "Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency" (1 Corinthians 7:3-5); "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1-4).

The Christian and His Vocation

It is axiomatic that the Christian life is a daily affair. The faithful Christian cannot separate any phase of his daily life from his relationship and loyalty to Christ. His vocational life, then, is certainly involved in his life in Christ.

First, we note that if a Christian is able to work, he must work. He cannot rightfully expect others to support him when he is able to support himself. If he does not work, he walks disorderly, casts reflection on the

name of Christ, and become an influence for evil. Such a person deserves to go hungry. These conclusions are drawn from the following passages: "But we exhort you, brethren . . . to do your own business, and to work with your hands, even as we charged you; that ye may walk becomingly toward them that are without, and may have need of nothing" (1 Thessalonians 4:10-12); "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some that walk among you disorderly, that work not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12).

A Christian is not only to work to supply with the help of Christ his own physical needs, but also the needs of his family and those who are unable to support themselves (1 Timothy 5:8; Acts 20:35).

Christian women who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of marriage and family assume as important and significant a vocation as exists, *homemaking*. Christian wives and mothers are exhorted to be "workers at home" (Titus 2:5), to "rule the household" (1 Timothy 5:14). No Christian woman can shirk her homemaking responsibilities and please the Lord.

We further note that a Christian is not to engage in a vocation that is morally wrong. And when he does right in choosing a vocation that is not wrong in itself, he is bound to conduct himself decently and honorably at all times. See Romans 12:17. Yes, he is to take Christ with him on the job.

Then, too, whatever one does vocationally, he is to do it energetically and zealously. Laziness, indolence, and slackness are unbecoming of any Christian. Whatever his vocation may be, the faithful Christian abides by the following principles: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10); "In diligence not slothful" (Romans 12:11); "Whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23).

In one's vocation, whether he be master or servant, employer or employee, he is to abide by the Christian principles of justice and charity. "Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord . . . Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven" (Colossians 3:22; 4:1).

The Christian and His Recreation

In order to maintain mental and physical health, the Christian needs the relaxation that comes with leisure-time activities. Such activities can be properly called *recreation*. However, any leisure-time activity that tears down rather than builds up, that saps one's mental and physical

strength, is not recreation but *dissipation*. The faithful Christian learns to know the difference between the two.

Jesus Christ advocates no gloomy philosophy of life. He does not deprive his followers of pleasurable pastime activities *as such*. His teaching only opposes what is detrimental to man's spiritual, mental, and physical life. Because one must eat and drink, it does not mean that he should take poison. And because one must have leisure-time activities, it does not mean that he must choose those activities which hinder the Christian life.

In the sense that pleasure can be wrong, the Bible refers to those who are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). Faithful Christians are lovers of God rather than lovers of pleasure. They do not make their recreational activities ends within themselves, but simply the means to the end of maintaining strong minds and bodies so that greater and more efficient service may be rendered to the Lord. In accepting the privilege of engaging in leisure-time activities, they realize that Christ, not their recreation, must come first in their lives. In such activities, they seek to please Christ and not just themselves.

There can be no question in the mind of a true follower of Christ as to the wrong in those activities which are specifically condemned in the divine word, such as drunkenness, fornication, etc. He knows that nothing which is expressly designated in the scriptures as sin can ever be justified as a recreational activity. But regarding particular activities which are not specified in the divine word, he must view them in the light of the principles of Christian conduct to determine whether participating in them will be pleasing to Christ. Concerning any such activity, he asks the following questions:

1. *Is it questionable so that to engage in it will violate my conscience?* (Romans 14:23)
2. *Is it harmful to my body?* (Romans 12:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 10:31)
3. *Is it harmful to me spiritually so that I will become conformed to the world and lose my identity as a Christian?* (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Titus 2:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)
4. *Does it cause me to have associations that are corrupting in their influence on me?* (1 Corinthians 15:33)
5. *Does it cause me to be unequally yoked so that I cannot fulfill all my responsibilities to Christ?* (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)
6. *Does it cause me to have a weakening influence on others so that I become a stumbling block to them?* (1 Corinthians 8:7-13; 10:23-33)

The Christian's Civic Responsibility

The Christian life involves obedience to civil laws, no matter what form of government the Christian lives under, as long as such obedience does not conflict with the will of Christ. See Acts 4:19. The faithful

Christian accepts the obligations involved in his earthly citizenship as part of the allegiance he owes the Lord. Indeed, as a loyal follower of Christ, the Christian makes the best kind of citizen, for the kind of life he lives is the only kind that can maintain harmony, peace, and order in any society. The very spirit that pervades the Christian life is law-abiding, orderly, and harmonious. As “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” the influence the Christian brings to bear on those about him can only exalt and uplift the community and nation in which he lives. See Proverbs 14:34.

As a loyal disciple of Christ, and thus a loyal citizen, the Christian pays his taxes, obeys ordinances and laws, and lends his worthy influence, efforts, and prayers to activities which will make his community and nation better places in which to live. Carefully read the following passages which express the will of Christ concerning the Christian’s civic responsibility:

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s . . .”
Matthew 22:21).

“Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: and the powers that are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment. For rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, and avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be in subjection, not only because of the wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. For this cause ye pay tribute also; for they are ministers of God’s service, attending continually upon this very thing. Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor”
(Romans 13:1-7).

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

When one comes to Christ for salvation, he becomes part of the church (Greek *ekklesia*, the called out) in its universal sense, which consists of the aggregate of all those in the world who have been called out of sin into salvation. See Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47; Ephesians 2:16; 5:23. It is God's will that he now become part of a local church, or congregation, which is the only unit of organization that God has ordained for His people. Under the supreme headship of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18), each congregation is independent or autonomous, with the oversight being invested in a plurality of elders, pastors, or bishops—three different terms referring to the same class of officers. See Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5-7; Acts 11:30; 14:23. Included in the organization of the congregation are deacons (Philippians 1:1,2; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). Each member of a local church organized after the divine pattern is bound to submit himself to the oversight of the elders. The elders in turn are bound to watch on behalf of the souls of the members, tending the flock given in their charge. See Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1,2.

The basic need the Christian has of membership in a congregation is the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ. Such fellowship in the broadest sense pertains to Christians everywhere (1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8:16-24; 9:1-15; 1 Thessalonians 4:9,10; 1 Peter 2:17; etc.); but it is in the local church that this fellowship is most intimately and fully realized.

In Christ the Christian enjoys fellowship with the entire Godhead—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (1 John 1:3,5-7; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 2:1); but of real significance also is the fellowship he has with those of a common faith and salvation. The idea of a solitary Christian is entirely foreign to the New Testament, and thus such a statement as “I believe in keeping myself to myself” is entirely incompatible with life in Christ. The plain fact is that Christians need each other to enjoy the fullness of life in Christ, just as the members of a literal, physical body need each other. That is the point of Paul's analogy between the body of Christ and the human body: “And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you” (1 Corinthians 12:21).

This need that Christians have of each other, the spirit of Christian fellowship and togetherness, was beautifully exemplified by the church in Jerusalem, described as follows: “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. . . And all that believed were together. . . And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul” (Acts 2:42,44; 4:32). In this fellowship of the Jerusalem church we see in a large measure the

unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17:20,21, such unity as should prevail in every congregation. See 1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 15:5,6.

Love for Each Other

The basis and motivating force for genuine Christian fellowship is love. Love is *caring*, as Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 12:25,26, “that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same *care* one for another. And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:25,26). Love is the climate in which Christian fellowship exists, thrives, and grows. When members of a local church truly care for or love each other, they will do anything and everything God enjoins on them to enjoy and benefit by the fellowship of each other.

Augustus Neander, the great church historian, wrote, “That which our Lord himself, in his last interview with his disciples, described as the test by which his disciples might be distinguished—as the mark of their fellowship with him and the Father in heaven, the mark of his glory dwelling the midst of them—namely *that they love one another—precisely this constituted the prominent mark, plain and striking to the pagans themselves*, of the first Christian fellowship.”

Carefully read 1 John 3:14,15; 4:20; Romans 12:10; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22.

Members of a congregation show their love for each other, and also for the Lord, as they enjoy fellowship in the following:

Worship

For one who loves his brethren and the Lord, recognizing his need of Christian fellowship, it is not difficult for him to obey the injunction of Hebrews 10:24,25, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works: not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.” Because they care for each other, loving also the Lord, faithful Christians attend, as they are able, *all* the services of the congregation, to enjoy the sweet fellowship of each other in the worship of God and in mutual edification. We see this spirit exemplified in the assembling of the Jerusalem church to pray for the imprisoned Peter, which prayer was answered in his subsequent release: “Peter therefore was kept in the prison: but prayer was made earnestly of the church unto God for him. . . . he came to the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together and were praying” (Acts 12:5,12). Can you imagine any loving member of the Jerusalem church who was able to attend this prayer meeting being absent, excusing himself by saying, “I can pray for Peter just as well in private as in being together with my brethren”?

Certainly, there is a time and need for private worship; for example, prayer and singing (Matthew 6:6; James 5:13); but there is also a time and need for the mutual edification we receive from worshipping God together. No loving Christian will substitute the former for the latter. It is not a case of either one or the other, but of both.

In this connection a few words should be offered concerning the importance of divine worship.

One of the marked characteristics of the earthly life of Jesus was His devout worship of God, the human in Him giving reverent homage to the divine. When the devil requested that Jesus fall down and worship him, the Lord emphatically expressed the fact that His worship belonged to Deity and none other: "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). As Jesus in His fleshly state expressed in His worship of God the overwhelming sense of the nearness, majesty, and glory of Deity, and thus was enabled to withstand temptation, so also in worship can we as His followers sense the august presence of God in our lives, thus receiving spiritual strength to enable us to withstand the fiery darts of the devil.

The worship of God is an essential part of life in Christ because it makes for holiness in the Christian. The worshiper tends to become like the object of his worship.

When we worship God we exalt Christ because He is our only access to God. "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Moreover, in a very real sense, to worship the Father is to worship the Son since He is also divine. "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:12). See Revelation 4:11.

The basic principle of acceptable worship is set forth in John 4:24, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." Worship "in spirit" means spiritually, not carnally, motivated worship: the correct attitude of heart and mind, a spirit of trust, reverence, adoration and love in approaching the throne of divine grace. No matter how strict one may be in worshipping God according to the divinely ordained forms, his worship will be null and void, of no spiritual upliftment to him, unless his attitude is correct. See Matthew 15:8.

Worship "in truth" means according to the divinely ordained forms, the acts of worship designated in the Lord's word since the word and truth are synonymous. See John 17:17. Deity refuses to accept any expression of worship unless it is according to the divine pattern.

The Lord's day, the first day of the week, is of special importance to the Christian in the fellowship of worship. On this day, the day on which our Lord rose from the dead, faithful Christians in each local church gather together to enjoy the fullness of fellowship in worship as they partake of the Lord's supper, pray, teach each other and praise God in

song, share of their material means in support of the Lord's work, and give heed to the apostles' doctrine. But fellowship in worship is not limited to the Lord's day. At any other time Christians gather together to sing, pray, and study the divine word, they receive encouragement to fulfill their mutual responsibilities in the daily walks of life, to walk together in the Lord's service. See Acts 2:42; 20:7; Revelation 1:10; Ephesians 5:18,19; Colossians 3:16,17; 1 Corinthians 14:15; 16:1,2. We shall give special attention to prayer, the Lord's supper, and the contribution in separate lessons of this discussion on life in Christ.

Mutual Help

Since each Christian needs every other Christian in the local church, they are to edify or build one another up in love, to help each other in every way that will contribute to their spiritual growth. "Wherefore exhort one another, and build each other up, even as also ye do" (1 Thessalonians 5:11). This can be done not only in the worship services and in the various Bible classes of the congregation, but also in the daily walks of life. Christian fellowship cannot be limited to the confines of a church building. Christians are taught: "Exhort one another day by day so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13); "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1,2); "Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed" (James 5:16). There and all similar injunctions cannot be obeyed by any one who limits his fellowship and contact with his fellow Christians to a church building. Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:25.

Not only are we to render spiritual help to our brethren, but also whatever physical or temporal assistance they may need. This was well exemplified in the church at Jerusalem when a great need of such assistance arose (Acts 2:44,45; 4:34,35). "Communicating to the necessities of the saints" (Romans 12:13). "But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. . . So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:6,10). See 1 John 3:17.

Needless to say, when Christians love each other they will seek the fellowship of each other socially and recreationally. Such being together will be of mutual help to them in strengthening the tie that binds them together in Christian love.

Service

The only way the local church can function in serving the Lord is through the individual members who compose it. But the work each

member does on behalf of Christ is not competitive but cooperative in relation to the other members, just as the members of a healthy human body function cooperatively and not competitively. See 1 Corinthians 12:21-27. With this spirit of cooperation, a Christian will become part of every work program, as he is able, of the congregation. This does not mean, however, that the congregation can function only when all the members are visibly gathered together. A loyal Christian who stands up for Christ in the factory where he works is doing church work, for he is there as part of the fellowship of the congregation with its plans, strategy, and encouragement behind him, and in submission to the oversight of the bishops. In every way possible, faithful Christians cooperate with each other to further Christ's cause in the world, and thus to further God's purpose concerning the local church.

Using Our Abilities

Any appropriate discussion of Christian fellowship must consider the various abilities of the members of the local church. Just as the human body is composed of members with different abilities and functions, so also is each congregation. "For even as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office: so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another. And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us. . . ." (Romans 12:4-6). Thus in cooperating with his fellow Christians in the congregation, the faithful Christian will use the abilities with which he is endowed in serving the Lord.

In Christ's parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30), when the one talent man was taken to task by his master for burying his talent instead of using it, he was not accused of getting drunk, committing adultery, etc.: yet he was charged with being "a wicked and slothful servant." He neglected to use his talent in the service of his master; thus he was reckoned as being a wicked person, as much so as if he had committed an overt act of carnality. Those who call themselves Christians, yet are lazy and indolent, who refuse or fail to "pitch in" and use their abilities in serving Christ and doing good to men, are also "wicked and slothful servants." They are unworthy of the name Christian, no matter how morally pure they may be. Jesus Christ gave Himself without stint in the service of God and mankind; and faithful Christians, imitating His example, continually say, "Here I am, Lord; use me in whatever way I can to further thy righteous cause in the world."

No work that glorifies God and helps man is beneath the dignity of the faithful Christian. Those who love both the Lord and their fellow men willingly serve in any capacity for which they have the ability, laboring to further the cause of Christ.

PRAYER

The revelation of the Bible involves a God-man relationship: God speaking to man. Prayer also involves a God-man relationship: man speaking to God. Both the Bible and prayer affirm the fact of the existence of a thinking, personal Supreme Being whom we call God, not merely "the bright essence of life," or "the power that makes for righteousness." In prayer are communicated the thoughts of the Christian to the infinite mind of God. Prayer is the Christian's means of expressing to God his requests for divine assistance and his utterances of praise and thanksgiving. In prayer the Christian tacitly admits his own frailty and weakness and therefore his constant need of the strength which God supplies through Christ; thus the exhortation of 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." The Christian can no more live to the fullest in this world and properly prepare for the bliss of heaven without communion with God in prayer than he can grow and live spiritually without the communion of God with him through the Bible.

The Efficacy of Prayer

The faithful Christian prays to God because he needs divine assistance, because of his love for God, and because *he believes that God answers prayer*. This belief is based on the divine assurance given by the Lord to His disciples in such passages as the following: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:7-11).

No righteous prayer is ever offered to God which does not receive an answer from Him. This does not mean that He answers all prayers immediately or exactly in the way the petitioners expect, but He does answer every prayer offered in accordance with His will and in the desire to see His will done. If one inadvertently asks God for something he should not have, subsequently failing to receive it, actually his prayer has been answered if he expressed in it the proviso that he desires only those things which are in keeping with the divine will. "But they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing" (Psalms 34:10).

Although God answers every acceptable prayer of His children, He does not answer them as a substitute for human endeavor. As we have already observed, true prayer is offered to God in recognition of the

Christian's need of divine assistance. The faithful Christian knows that after he has accomplished all that is possible by his own physical and mental strength, he will still fail to live life to the fullest and properly prepare for eternity unless he receives the benefits of God's grace in answer to his prayers; thus he prays with ceasing. But he also well knows that his prayers are a mockery unless he strives toward the most efficient service possible in doing the will of God and in ordering the affairs of his daily life.

Basic Characteristics of Acceptable Prayer

The following characteristics of acceptable prayer are worthy of consideration by all faithful Christians who would be sure that their prayers are heard of God:

1. *Must be offered in faith.* God will not answer any prayer unless it is offered to Him in faith. "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22).

2. *Must be offered in sincerity, humility, and fervency.* "I will pray with the spirit . . ." (1 Corinthians 14:15). The word "spirit" refers to spiritually motivated prayer: an attitude of sincerity, humility, and fervency. "Hear the right, O Jehovah, attend unto my cry; Give ear unto my cry; Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips" (Psalms 17:1). "Wherefore the scripture saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

When one prays to God in humility and sincerity, he will necessarily be single-minded, intense, and fervent—not halfhearted, listless, and lethargic. His whole being will be projected toward the mind of God. "Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed *fervently* . . ." (James 5:17). "Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, saluteth you, always *striving* for you in his prayers . . ." (Colossians 4:12).

3. *Must be offered with understanding.* "I will pray with the understanding" (1 Corinthians 14:15). It is possible to pray a false doctrine. We must strive to offer prayers that are in keeping with the teaching of God's holy word. Involved in praying with the understanding is the expressed desire that one's prayers always be according to God's will (1 John 5:14).

4. *Must be offered in the name of Christ.* Jesus said, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do" (John 14:13,14). See Colossians 3:17. Since Jesus Christ is our high priest, He alone can take our prayers to the throne of God's grace (Hebrews 4:14-16).

5. *Must be preceded by faithful, righteous living.* Because our faith in and love for Christ are never perfect in any stage of the Christian life, we all sin at times (James 3:2; 1 John 1:8); consequently, we all stand

in need of divine forgiveness. But our prayers will not be answered unless they are offered in a penitent spirit. The child of God who *persists* in the course of sin is not on praying terms with his heavenly Father. If we would pray to God for His manifold blessings and have our petitions granted, we must zealously strive to follow the path of obedience, for "the supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (James 5:16). "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God; and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:21,22). See John 15:7.

6. *Must avoid vain repetitions.* The Lord does not denounce the use of repetition in prayer *as such*, but *vain* repetitions; the useless, inane mumbling of the same expressions over and over again. "And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matthew 6:7,8).

Elements of Acceptable Prayer

Included in prayers that reach the throne of God are the following elements:

1. *Adoration and praise.* The very act of the Christian praying acceptably to God presupposes his respect for the infinite grace, dignity, love, majesty, and goodness of the heavenly Father. How can any Christian who is deeply devoted to God keep from expressing this attitude of love and devotion when he prays to Him who is the source of every good and perfect gift? Reverent men in all ages have lifted up their voices to the Creator in adoration and praise, as they ascribe to Him all honor, power, and glory. "Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty . . ." (1 Chronicles 29:11). It was said of the first converts to Christ that they continued steadfastly in "praising God" (Acts 2:47). May we do likewise.

2. *Thanksgiving.* Expressions of thanksgiving to God are prominent throughout the whole Bible. "O give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name" (1 Chronicles 16:3); "Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2); etc. It is indeed necessary that our prayers be permeated with thanksgiving to Him whose blessings fill our lives during our sojourn upon the earth and whose power can lead us safely home in the afterworld.

3. *Confession.* An integral part of righteous prayer is the confession of sin, which, when expressive of true repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10), is a prerequisite for God's forgiveness through the blood of Christ. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Prayer devoid of the confession of sins is prayer devoid of the spirit of humility. No Christian can come into the righteous presence of God in

the spirit of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving who fails to penitently confess his sins. See Luke 15:18.

4. *Petition.* A leading purpose in praying is to petition God for His aid. See Philippians 4:6. Indeed, all prayer, as we have already considered, is predicated on the basis of man's sense of his need of divine help. Righteous prayer to God assumes that man is weak and God is strong, that man is insufficient in himself. Out of man's sense of weakness goes his cry for divine assistance, and prayer becomes a reality.

Among the Christian's personal needs which God supplies in answer to prayer are forgiveness of sins, moral and spiritual guidance, and deliverance from temptation. See Matthew 6:12; 26:41; Acts 8:22; James 1:5; 1 John 2:1,2. Then, too, in answer to prayer God can bolster the Christian's efforts to secure physical sustenance, such as food, drink, clothing, and shelter (Matthew 6:11,33). In answer to prayer God also helps the Christian's efforts to seek the healing of his infirmities. See James 5:13-16.

5. *Intercession.* Prayers which are entirely self-centered, which seek God's blessings for oneself alone, are not acceptable to the Father. We are taught to pray for others as well as for self. "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men . . ." (1 Timothy 2:1). Every human being stands in need of God's help; thus every human being comes within the scope of our prayers.

Righteous intercessory prayer is expressive of good will toward all men, the seeking of their good and never of their harm. It is in truly loving all men that we find the motivation to pray for them. The greatest service that loving Christians can render any human being is to pray for him. Let us observe some of the specific classes of men for whom we should pray, included in the "all men" of 1 Timothy 2:1: political leaders (1 Timothy 2:2), spiritual leaders and gospel preachers (Hebrews 13:18; 2 Thessalonians 3:1,2; Colossians 4:2,3; Acts 12:5), all the brethren (Colossians 1:3; Philemon 4; James 5:16), and our enemies (Matthew 5:43-45).

Prayer in the Life of Jesus

The importance of prayer is best exemplified in the life of Jesus, our perfect example. Although He never used prayer for the confessing of sins since His life was devoid of all offense toward God and man, yet He relied on prayer constantly as the means of maintaining communion with God the Father. If the sinless One, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our elder brother, relied on prayer for victorious living, how dire is the necessity that we, the younger sons of God, rely on prayer in order to sustain our lives in keeping with the divine will!

An example of the reliance of our Lord upon the strength and care of God in prayer was His petition in the garden of Gethsemane, as He faced persecution and death: "And he went forward a little, and fell on his face,

and prayed, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus was mindful of the need of praise and thanksgiving in His prayers: "At that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth . . ." (Matthew 11:25).

Jesus prayed not only for Himself, but for others. He was most solicitous for the welfare of His disciples. For example, He prayed for their protection against evil and for their unity. See John 17:15,20,21. He prayed not only for His followers, but also for His enemies. What wonderful love is portrayed in His prayer of forgiveness for those who were guilty of His crucifixion: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34)!

We see perfect sincerity, fervency, and humility in all the prayers of Jesus. Nothing was more characteristic of the life of Jesus than His constant attention to prayer. Are we continuing steadfastly in prayer by following His example?

Conclusion

And now, dear fellow Christians, let us consider the status of our prayers? Are we praying without ceasing—morning, noon, and night? Are we praying for all men everywhere, for our enemies as well as our friends? Are we praying in adoration, praise, and thanksgiving? Are we praying in penitent confession of our sins? Are we praying for the necessities of life, both spiritual and physical? Are our prayers preceded by lives that strive to follow the footsteps of Jesus? Are we praying both alone and with our brethren? Are we praying through Jesus Christ, "the way, and the truth, and the life"? Praying! Praying! Praying! Until hope ends in fulfillment and faith ends in sight.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

In an upper room of a house in Jerusalem on the night of His betrayal, Jesus gathered His disciples around Him for the last time to partake of the passover feast. Behind this small company were approximately three and a half years of tender and intimate association. And now the beloved Master was soon to depart from His disciples. Already Judas, the traitorous disciple, had bargained with the chief priests for the Lord's betrayal. Jesus stood face to face with death; before Him were the sorrow of Gethsemane and the agony of Calvary. He had told the disciples that "he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (Matthew 16:21). But they neither understood the wisdom nor the necessity of His death. They had envisioned Jesus as a potentate over an earthly kingdom. What was to become of them and their hopes if Jesus died?

The hour of the passover had now come, of that sacred feast which commemorated God's deliverance of the firstborn of Israel from the dread hand of death. The old covenant, of which the passover was a part, was about ended; and soon a new covenant, ratified by the blood of Christ, was to be given. Jesus availed Himself of a symbol to forcefully teach the purpose of His death to the disciples and to instill within them hope and courage in view of His departure, a symbol which was to be continually part of the new covenant to commemorate the salvation offered in it.

The Master's use of this symbol inaugurated the blessed feast, the Lord's supper. Four accounts of this event are presented in the divine word: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19,20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. The reader is urged to carefully study all four of these accounts, but for the sake of brevity only two are quoted here: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26-29); "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

Let us humbly and reverently investigate in this lesson the New Testa-

ment teaching concerning the Lord's supper, ordained for public worship on the first day of the week, Sunday (1 Corinthians 11:20-34; Acts 20:7), the sole religious feast peculiar to the New Testament. In considering the purpose and meaning of the Lord's supper, the partaking of which is an integral part of the fruitful life in Christ, we note the following:

A Symbolic Feast

The elements of the Lord's supper are symbolic. When Jesus declared in reference to the bread and fruit of the vine, "this is my body . . . this is my blood" (Matthew 26:26-28), His words could not possibly have been understood literally by the disciples to whom He was speaking; thus it was unnecessary for Him to make any explanation as to the meaning of this utterance. The disciples were matter-of-fact, observant men. They were fully aware that when Jesus spoke these words His blood was still coursing through His veins and His body was something quite different from the bread He held in His hands. To affirm that the disciples understood the words of Jesus in a literal sense as applying to His actual flesh and blood, is to accuse them of being childishly naive and credulous. And so we understand that the words, "this is my body . . . this is my blood," are not to be taken literally but figuratively: the bread and the fruit of the vine symbolize (are *like* or *represent*) the Lord's body and blood. See Luke 8:11; John 15:5.

A Memorial Feast

Men are seemingly forever prone to forget the outstanding events of the past, even those which have especially been of great blessing to them. It is this fact that lies behind all the monuments and memorials men have ever created.

The picture one treasures of his deceased mother, for example, is a constant reminder of the blessings and joy received from her unselfish and gracious deeds of love and devotion while she lived; and it serves to keep the image of her blessed countenance forever fresh and alive in the heart. The tombstone placed over a grave serves to call to remembrance the life of some loved one, friend, or famous personality.

The greatest event in the history of the world was the sacrificial offering of the Saviour's body and the shedding of His precious blood on Calvary's cross in order to redeem man from the bondage of sin. This event is the central theme of the gospel. See 1 Corinthians 2:2.

To the end that the disciples of Christ, those who have been benefited by this most significant of all events, may have an abiding memorial to keep fresh in their minds the suffering and death of the Saviour for their sins, Jesus has left no statues or personal relics of Himself; only the simple feast, the Lord's supper, which is indeed the world's greatest monument to commemorate the world's greatest event. In connection with partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine, Jesus said, "This do

in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24,25). The eating of the bread reminds the Christian of the body which was slain for him, and the drinking of the fruit of the vine recalls to his mind the blood which was shed for his sins. The Saviour knew how men would be tempted to forget Him; thus He appointed the ordinance of the Lord's supper as an impressive means by which His sweet memory should always be kept alive in the hearts of His followers.

A Communion Feast

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16). The word "communion" is from the Greek *kononia*, meaning fellowship, participation, association, intimacy. It is true that Christians participate in the blessings of Christ's body and blood, to receive spiritual nourishment, by striving to keep all the ordinances of the Lord (Matthew 4:4; 5:6; John 6:63); but there is no more intimate fellowship they have with the sacrifice of Jesus than in their partaking of the Lord's supper. It is impossible for any child of God to walk in the light who forsakes himself from the gathering of the saints around the Lord's table to commemorate the death of the Saviour, and to walk in darkness is to be without the blessings of His blood and body. See 1 John 1:6,7.

When one remembers his Lord in partaking of the bread and cup, not only does he receive rich blessings from the act itself, but he also gains moral and spiritual strength to walk faithfully in the path of duty and to keep all the commandments and precepts of Christ. In the fullest sense the Lord's supper is a communion of the body and blood of Christ because it gives us a powerful impetus to walk continually in the light, every hour of every day, so that we may perpetually have full and complete fellowship with the manifold blessings of our Saviour.

A Proclamation

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The Lord's supper is *retrospective* in that it points back to Calvary. When saints partake of the bread and cup, they are impressively proclaiming to the world the solemn and sublime fact that the broken body and shed blood of Jesus were given on the cross for the sins of the world. This is a sermon that every Christian can and must preach.

When the passover was enjoined upon God's people the Israelites, they were told that in years to come when their children asked them the meaning of this feast, they were to relate the story of the slain paschal lamb and God's deliverance of their forefathers from death and bondage. See Exodus 13:7-10. Thus it is with the Lord's supper. When Christians receive the bread and cup, thanking God for this glorious blessing and

privilege, and teaching others the meaning of these emblems, they are bearing testimony concerning the Lamb of God, who was offered for deliverance from the bondage of sin to all who surrender their lives to Him.

By participating in the communion service, the child of God is not only teaching the *fact* of the Saviour's death for the sins of men, but he is also publicly confessing his firm *belief* in this fact. Surely, this is a confession that all faithful Christians take unspeakable joy in making, even as they do in verbally acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The Lord's supper is *prospective* in that it proclaims the fact that Jesus is coming again. The Lord's supper is a constant reminder to the Christian that the Lord has promised to return and that he therefore should so live that he will be prepared to meet Him at any time (Matthew 24:42-44).

A Symbol of Unity

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? *seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread*" (1 Corinthians 10:16,17). The *one* bread of the Lord's supper symbolizes the *one* body, the church of Christ. See 1 Corinthians 12:13-20. The *one* bread is a perpetual reminder that the Lord established only *one* body (Ephesians 4:4), and that this *one* body is His church (Colossians 1:18; Matthew 16:18). Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20,21), and His inspired apostles taught in favor of unity and against division (1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 15:5,6; 16:17; etc.).

When faithful, loyal Christians reverently partake of the communion feast, receiving the *one* bread and fruit of the vine, they are declaring the oneness of the body of Christ, the church, and making an ardent plea to all those who are guilty of practicing religious division to depart from this sin, and, by loyalty to God's word, to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

Manner of Partaking

"*Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup*" (1 Corinthians 11:27,28). This quotation is from the American Standard Version. The expression "in an unworthy manner" defines the meaning of the word "unworthily," the rendering of the Authorized Version. "Unworthily" is an adverb and not an adjective, as some have supposed, and does not designate a person's spiritual state or his qualification to commune, but rather his *manner* of partaking.

It is certainly true, though, that one's *manner* of partaking will be

determined by his basic spiritual attitudes and activities. An incorrect life cannot produce a correct *manner* of communion.

Let the Christian approach the Lord's table with the realization that he is striving diligently to live like Christ. Let him feel a deep sense of penitence for the sins he has committed. Then let him partake of the bread and cup with his entire mind concentrated in love and adoration upon that which is represented by these emblems, the body and blood of Christ. Let him understand that the communion he is enjoying is of the blessings of the sacrifice of the Saviour. Let him feel in his heart deep and abiding appreciation for the light and joy that have come into his life through the forgiveness afforded by Calvary. Surely, such reverent, serious, and loving partaking of the Lord's supper can be only pleasing to God and spiritually uplifting to the participant.

"Shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"—To treat profanely the bread, the emblem of the Lord's broken body, is to treat profanely the body itself; and, in like manner, the fruit of the vine, the symbol of His blood. Those therefore who treat profanely the Lord's body and blood are united in spirit with those who put Him to death. *They are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.* See Hebrews 6:6. It is indeed a fearful thing to partake of the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner!

"But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup"—Before a person can partake of the Lord's supper in a worthy manner, he must first *prove* himself. The word "prove" is from the Greek *dokimazo*. This was the technical word used in classical Greek for putting money to the test to find out whether it was genuine or not. In the proving demanded by the text, the individual is to put himself to the test to find out whether his motives and attitudes in approaching the Lord's table are genuine and sincere. He is to examine himself candidly and carefully to find out whether he is in such a state of seriousness, reverence, and devotion as to be able to worthily eat of the bread and drink the cup.

THE CONTRIBUTION

Contributing of one's monetary means to the Lord in fellowship with other Christians is an integral part of the worship of God and thus of the full life in Christ. No one can please the Lord who fails to acceptably engage in this phase of the Christian life.

The Christian As a Steward

Since the faithful Christian, above all men, recognizes the Creator's absolute proprietorship of all things (Genesis 14:22; 1 Chronicles 29:10,11,14; Psalms 24:1), he is thoroughly aware of his relationship to Him as a steward, as one who has been entrusted with the care of God's property. A steward manages the affairs and possessions of another without laying claim to ownership. This idea is clearly portrayed in the parable of the pounds, found in the nineteenth chapter of Luke: "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come, etc." The servants did not claim ownership of the money entrusted in their care; they realized that they were only stewards. When the time of reckoning came, each one said to his master, "Thy pound."

And what of the Christian's money? Can he rightfully claim absolute ownership of it? Certainly not! It has been given to him solely as a trust, to be used in ways which will please his divine Master. "Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). The Christian is held accountable for every cent of money God has placed in his care. He cannot fail to give liberally in support of the Lord's work and be faithful to this trust.

God has entrusted in the care of His stewards more than money, houses, land, food, clothing, and other material things. Indeed, the Christian's entire life and all his manifold responsibilities are involved in his stewardship, for the proprietorship of God includes the whole man and everything with which he has been blessed. The Christian is a steward of his body, including both its mental and physical capacities." . . . and ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). The Christian is a steward of the gospel, for it is his responsibility to sound out the precious word of God to a lost and dying world. See Mark 16:15,16. Too much cannot be said about the profound significance of the Christian's stewardship. ". . . each has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10).

Stewardship in giving, with which this lesson is primarily concerned,

is truly an important phase of the responsibilities God has enjoined on His children. But, after all, it is just *one* phase of stewardship, and cannot be disassociated from the sum total of the Christian's many duties. The surrender of self to God must precede the devotement of our material means to Him. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service" (Romans 12:1).

In order to encourage the saints in Corinth to liberal giving, Paul referred to the bountiful giving of the churches in Macedonia: ". . . their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Why did such poverty-stricken people give so liberally? Because "first they gave their own selves to the Lord" (verse 5). Why do so many who call themselves Christians fail to give liberally? Because they have not first of all truly given themselves to the Lord. It is axiomatic that personal consecration must precede pocketbook consecration.

The Christian who accepts the fact of God's absolute ownership of all things, who considers himself a steward of the manifold grace of God, who has consecrated in love and without stint his entire life to Christ—body, soul, mind, and material means—who keeps Christ in his heart, gladly accepts and strives to practice all that the Bible teaches him about his responsibility to give of his material means in furtherance of the cause of Christ. He well knows that to be stingy, selfish, and greedy, to withhold what rightfully should be given to the Lord of the money which he has been blessed, is to reject the example of the Saviour, who gave His all to benefit the sons of men. See 2 Corinthians 8:9; Titus 2:14. He is aware that when one is illiberal in his giving he is unloving in his attitude toward the Lord. The loyal Christian keeps in mind the plain fact that it is impossible for the loving, liberal Saviour to dwell in any heart which is pinched by penury.

We shall now consider some basic scriptural facts concerning the contribution, or giving.

Each Christian Is to Give

"Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store" (1 Corinthians 16:2). Which of "you," Christians, does the divine word say are to give? "*Each one* of you." No Christian who has been blessed by God with material means is exempt from the responsibility of giving. All who have received from God are to give—irrespective of age, sex, marital status, or financial condition: men, women, boys, girls, husbands, wives, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, rich and poor—*each* Christian!

The relationship of Christians to each other in the Lord's work is basically that of *fellowship*, which we gave special attention to in lesson eight. This word, from the Greek *koinonia*, has as one of its meanings "a sharing." It is said of the first converts to Christ that among other things they continued steadfastly in *fellowship* (Acts 2:42). When Chris-

tians give money to the Lord, they are sharing of their financial means, having fellowship with each other in carrying the burden of responsibility Christ has enjoined on the local church, or congregation.

Purposeful Giving

“*Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart . . .*” (2 Corinthians 9:7). This passage teaches that acceptable giving must result from purpose. One cannot please Christ who attends the Lord’s day worship without having planned or purposed in his heart the amount of his contribution.

Proportionate Giving

“*. . . as he may prosper*” (1 Corinthians 16:2). This passage states that the extent of our giving is to be regulated by the extent we have prospered. The more we receive the more we are expected to give, and the less we receive the less we are expected to give. See 2 Corinthians 8:12.

Liberal, Sacrificial Giving

The Lord will not accept the contribution we make Him unless it is expressive of a liberal, sacrificial spirit. Such passages as 2 Corinthians 9:6 stress the importance of liberal giving: “But this I say, He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.”

Liberal giving has always characterized loving, loyal believers in God. Every faithful Jew, rich and poor alike, under the Old Testament gave at least the tithe, one-tenth, with the sure promise that God would bless him for so doing. Carefully read Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:21,26; Malachi 3:8-10. The tithe was by no means all that faithful Jews gave. Indeed, some Bible scholars have concluded on the basis of strong evidence that the average Jew gave over half of his income to Jehovah. The tithe, however, was the focal point, the core, of the Jews’ program of giving, even as the contribution in fellowship with each other on the first day of the week is the core of our program of giving.

It is true that the New Testament does not enjoin the tithe *as such* on the followers of Christ, but does it follow that the faithful Christian can give less than one-tenth of his income to the Lord in his contribution? Is it not unthinkable that Christians can acceptably give less in the support of God’s work than was given by faithful Jews, in light of the fact that they have a better covenant than the Jews (Hebrews 8:6), with greater examples of giving (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 8:9), and a weightier responsibility enjoined on them (Mark 16:15,16)? Should not the Christian, living under grace and led by the example of the most liberal one who ever lived on the earth, the Lord Jesus Christ, think of the

one-tenth as the very minimum of his giving, and strive continually to reach the outermost limit of his ability to give?

Liberal giving involves the putting of the Lord *first* in the use of the material means He has entrusted in our care. This means that we must give to Him even before we provide the so-called necessities of life for ourselves and families.

God, the divine proprietor of all things, must come first in the Christian's stewardship of money. God will not bless any one who puts Him last in the use of material things. See Genesis 4:4; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Proverbs 3:9,10; Matthew 6:33.

Acceptable, truly liberal giving always involves the element of sacrifice. When God gave His only begotten Son to die for the sins of the world, He made an untold sacrifice. When Jesus divested Himself of His heavenly glory and riches to come to this earth to live in poverty and to die on Calvary, He, too, made an untold sacrifice. How can any one possibly be Christlike whose giving is not expressive of a sacrificial spirit? See Mark 12:41-44; Matthew 16:24.

It is axiomatic that men always sacrifice for those whom they love. The basic reason why certain individuals who claim to be followers of the Lord do not sacrifice in their giving is that they do not actually love God and His Son. Concerning the responsibility of Christians to give liberally of their material means, Paul said, "proving . . . the sincerity also of your love" (2 Corinthians 8:8). How do we prove the sincerity of our love for the Lord? By sacrificial, liberal giving. The person who talks about his love for Christ, yet fails to sacrifice in his giving, is guilty of insincerity.

Cheerful Giving

"Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). The Greek word for "cheerful" is *hilaros*, literally meaning hilarious. Yes, the spirit that pervades genuine Christian giving is that of hilarity—an exuberance of joy, a feeling of intense delight. God does not want our contribution unless it is given willingly and joyfully. David, in recounting the liberality of the Jews when they brought gifts to the temple, used the expression "offered willingly," or its equivalent, six times in the twenty-ninth chapter of first Chronicles.

"Not grudgingly" means "not of grief." Many give to the Lord who actually grieve over it, wishing for their money back again. They give only "of necessity," under duress and constraint, not joyfully and willingly. Obviously, such givers do not receive the approbation of God.

Why Give?

Why should we give liberally and cheerfully of our means to the Lord? Because He requires it of us. But why does He require it? To further

His cause on the earth? Yes. But primarily we are required to give liberally and cheerfully for our own good.

All rational men are seeking for a state of well-being, of happiness, in this world. Illiberal givers are just as desirous of securing happiness as the liberal ones. But they have accepted the false conclusion that only by spending or keeping their money for themselves can they find life's highest good and greatest happiness. Jesus taught that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). True, men receive momentary feelings of pleasure and well-being from the money they spend on themselves or from the pride of possession. There are, however, far greater and lasting blessings to be received from giving to the Lord. When a Christian has truly learned this lesson, he cannot keep from being liberal and cheerful in his giving. Read carefully 2 Corinthians 9:6-11.

Covetousness

The word "covetousness" in the New Testament is from the Greek *pleonexia*, meaning "avarice, greediness." It is evident that members of the church who fail to lay by in store what rightfully should be given to the Lord are covetous, for they are greedy, avaricious individuals.

Paul said, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). The apostle does not say that money itself is evil, for money does not have a moral quality; but he does affirm that the *love* of money—the avaricious, greedy desire for its possession—is a source of every kind of evil.

Covetousness in the form of illiberal giving is especially dangerous to the soul because of the insidiousness of its effects. Unlike such plainly evident sins as drunkenness, murder, and stealing, covetousness can quite easily be covered by a cloak of piety and sanctimoniousness. Think of the stingy, penurious members of the church who are considered by their brethren as faithful Christians—even "pillars" of the church! Who ever heard of a known drunkard, murderer, or thief who was considered by any one as a faithful follower of Christ?

Oh, could we but penetrate the shell of self-righteousness covering the covetous man, who fails to give liberally of his money to the Lord, and deeply impress on his mind the terrible fact that he is more unlike Christ than any other person in sin! The very core of Christianity is the spirit of liberal giving: God *giving* His only begotten Son and Jesus *giving* Himself as a ransom for the human race.

Indeed, the illiberal, covetous man actually denies the living God, substituting filthy lucre for Him as the object of his worship. ". . . covetous man, who is an idolator" (Ephesians 5:5). ". . . covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Covetousness is the negation of spiritual worship, the worshipping of the created rather than the Creator. It is the service of mammon; hence, it is the rejection of the service of God. See Matthew 6:24; Luke 12:15-21.

DANGER OF APOSTASY

Living in a world of darkness and sin, a world in which the majority of men are materialistic in their thinking and without Christ, the Christian is confronted by influences that would wean him away from Christ and destroy him spiritually. There is nothing more plainly taught in the New Testament than the possibility of a Christian destroying his faith by succumbing to the evil influences around him, thus to lose his soul.

Falling Away from the Faith

“But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith” (1 Timothy 4:1). “The Spirit saith expressly.” The Christian can indeed fall away from the faith; he can indeed quit believing in Christ and thus forfeit eternal life.

Branches Destroyed

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:1-6). The branches designated here represent those who have been brought into union with Christ, who are in Him. It is possible, however, for these branches not to bear fruit; that is, to fail to obey the Lord’s will and to trust in him, consequently to be taken away, “cast forth as a branch . . . cast into the fire and burned,” evidently referring to their eternal condemnation. Can there be any plainer description of apostasy, of falling from grace, due to the failure of those who have come into Christ to live fruitful lives?

After the Lord said, “Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you,” descriptive of those who have been truly converted to him, in the very next verse He commands them, “Abide in me.” If, however, the Lord’s disciples are eternally secure and cannot fall from grace, this would be a needless command. But disciples of Christ must be duly exhorted to abide in Christ because there is the constant possibility that they will quit abiding in Him and suffer eternal condemnation.

1 John 3:24 states, “And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him.” It is plainly taught in the scriptures that a child

of God can fail to keep the divine commandments, thus sinning (1 John 1:8; 3:4); and when such a one persists in the course of sin, he no longer abides in Christ, nor Christ in him, which means that he has fallen from divine grace and is in grave danger of being eternally lost.

The Examples of Hebrew Apostates

The reader is now asked to study 1 Corinthians 10:1-12, all of which we will not quote because of the limitation of space. In this reference Paul describes the disobedience of the Jews in the wilderness and the consequent rejection of them by God. Who were these Jews? They were God's children (Deuteronomy 14:1). Yet "with most of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness" (verse 5), not being permitted to enter into Canaan, the earthly land of promise—a plain case of apostasy. Why was this written to Christians? Undeniably to show them that they, too, can fall from God's favor, not being permitted to enter into heaven, the eternal land of promise. "Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (verse 6). "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (verse 11).

Consider the sins that caused the Israelites to perish in the wilderness and the fact that God's children today, Christians, can commit the same sins and thus fall from the grace of God: 1. *Idolatry* (verse 7). See verse 14. 2. *Fornication* (verse 8). See 1 Corinthians 5:1-7. 3. *Making trial of the Lord* (verse 9). See Acts 5:9; 15:10.

After Paul shows his readers the danger of falling from grace by the examples of the apostatizing Jews, he bluntly concludes his warning by declaring, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (verse 12). Fall from what? The favor of God, just as the unbelieving, disobeying Jews fell from divine favor and were overthrown in the wilderness. If any of God's children think that it is impossible for them to fall from grace, Paul insists that they are in the greatest danger of falling.

Much Sorer Punishment

"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his

people. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Who are depicted in this passage? Definitely, children of God. Notice how they are described:

1. *Received the knowledge of the truth.* One might conclude that this was merely academic knowledge of the truth which these persons received were it not for the further description the writer gives of them, undeniably portraying them as children of God. The fact is that they received the knowledge of the truth because without it they could not be delivered from sin. See John 8:32; 17:17.

2. *Sanctified by the blood of the covenant.* There can be no reasonable doubt that this is a description of people who have become children of God, for they have received the benefits of Christ's blood in being sanctified. In this context the word "sanctified" from the Greek *hagiazō* means "to purify by expiation, free from guilt of sin." See Ephesians 5:26; Hebrews 10:10,14,29. Can any one be freed from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ and not become a child of God?

Now let us consider what, children of God, those who have been sanctified, can do.

1. *They can sin wilfully.* Most Bible scholars explain "sinning wilfully" as falling into complete apostasy; that is, the child of God so sinning as to cut himself off deliberately and determinedly from all further part in the sacrifice of Christ, rejecting this sacrifice as futile.

2. *They can tread under foot the Son of God.* Those who sin wilfully even express contempt and enmity toward Christ.

3. *They can count Christ's blood an unholy thing.* The precious blood of Christ is considered by such apostates as a common thing without any atoning power.

4. *They can do despite unto the Spirit of grace.* It is plainly said of the Spirit in the holy scriptures that He can be grieved and vexed so that He will depart from the hearts of God's children who determinedly disobey the divine commandments. See Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19. The phrase "hath done despite" signifies rejection with insult and injury. Will any say that such apostates will be saved in heaven?

The text clearly portrays the results of apostasy: "A fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire," a "much sorer punishment" than death "without compassion" under the law of Moses, obviously a description of eternal condemnation.

Name Blotted Out of the Book of Life

"He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5). It is surely agreed by all Bible believers that those whose names are written in the book of life are Christians, God's children. Cf. Philippians 4:3, "Yea, I beseech thee also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they

labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellowworkers, whose names are in the book of life." It is further agreed that those whose names are not found in the book of life will be eternally condemned. "And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15).

If it is impossible for Christians to fail to overcome and to have their names blotted out of the book of life, then the passage under consideration has no meaning at all, being wasted, needless warning to God's children. But Jesus through John is giving this warning to all Christians because it is entirely possible for them to be negligent of their responsibilities, to fail to overcome, to have their names blotted out of the book of life, and to be eternally lost.

See Colossians 1:21-23; 2 Timothy 2:16-18.

Keeping from Apostasy

It is impossible for any Christian to lose his soul, to apostatize, who is alert to the warnings of God's word concerning the possibility of apostasy, who sincerely desires to continually maintain his loving faith in the Lord. Such a person essentially gives heed to the following scriptural warnings: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41); "So then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober" (1 Thessalonians 5:6); "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them . . . how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Hebrews 2:1,3); "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour, whom withstand steadfast in your faith" (1 Peter 5:8,9); "Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue, etc. . . . Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-7, 10,11). See Matthew 5:11,12; Galatians 6:9; Ephesians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14.

And as the faithful Christian, who would truly maintain his life in Christ, gives heed to the foregoing injunctions, to strive diligently to obey the divine will, he all the while trusts in the Lord for strength to resist temptation and to endure the tribulations and trials that come his way. "Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation" (2 Peter 2:9). "But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one" (2 Thessalonians 3:3); "Now

unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of his glory without blemish in exceeding joy . . . through Jesus Christ our Lord . . ." (Jude 24,25). See 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; 15:57-58; Hebrews 2:18; 1 Peter 1:4,5; 1 John 5:4.

And when the faithful Christian, whose essential, paramount desire is to maintain his life in Christ and to inherit eternal life in heaven, sins along the way because of the imperfection of his faith and love, he need not despair; he has the promise of the continual cleansing power of the blood of Christ (1 John 1:6-10). Such a one is not under the dominion of sin (Romans 6:12-14); he is not entangled in and overcome by sin (2 Peter 2:20). He can thus face life essentially without fear, but with assurance, confidence, and hope (Romans 5:2; 8:1; 2 Corinthians 1:21,22; 13:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:16; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 11:1; 1 John 5:13).

To the Backslider

A word of reproof and exhortation to the backslider is in order here. You who at one time were a faithful disciple of Christ, but who no longer walks with Him, have gone over on the side of the archenemy Satan. In forsaking Christ, you have stopped growing as a child of God, and so you are dying spiritually. You must face up to the serious fact that the expressions of your prodigal state—your failures to pray, to give, to serve, etc.—are but symptoms of a faith and love that have become weak and unavailing. Your spiritually destitute condition is due to your failure to keep the thoughts of Christ and heaven uppermost in your heart. You have failed to "remember Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:8), to "consider him" (Hebrews 12:3). And you have forgotten Him because you have become spiritually "blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from your old sins" (2 Peter 1:9). Yes, in forgetting the forgiveness of sins you received when you surrendered your life to Christ, you have forgotten the source of this great blessing.

You have departed from the Christ-life to the self-life, and thus to human weakness and failure. In your selfishness, you have been unwilling to pay the price of discipleship in self-denial and self-sacrifice (Luke 14:27-30). You have broken your marriage vow to the Lord, becoming a spiritual adulteress (James 4:4). Christ has not forsaken you, but you have forsaken Him, the best friend you can possibly ever have.

And now you walk in darkness, separated from the grace of God and the power of Christ, with doom staring you in the face. But Jesus still loves you and desires your loyalty to Him. In a passage of surpassing beauty, compassion, and tenderness, He pleads with you to receive Him back again in your life: "As many as I love, I reprove and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:19,20).

Will you not again take a good look at Jesus Christ and Him crucified, recalling His past blessings, believing and trusting in Him, loving Him, and being grateful to Him, to seek His pardon in sincere repentance of your sins, to walk with Him the rest of your days, and finally to claim your heavenly inheritance when time shall vanish in the morning glow of eternity? See Ephesians 5:14-17.

THE GLORIOUS CONSUMMATION

Life in Christ is a life of vision that extends beyond this world. Everyone who surrenders his life to Christ does so because he realizes that he has a soul to keep from being eternally lost. He is soberly aware that all existence does not end at the grave. He knows that this world is not his eternal home, that he is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth (Hebrews 11:13), and that the journey he is now making under the leadership of Christ has as its final destination the celestial home *heaven*, the glorious consummation of life in Christ.

The apostle Paul expressed words applicable to every faithful Christian when he said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Paul well knew that if he proved faithful to his Master, by divine grace he would eventually receive the priceless heritage of a heavenly home. He further declared, "But now being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end eternal life" (Romans 6:22). In 2 Timothy 2:10-12 he stated, ". . . the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him." Jesus said, "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved" (Matthew 10:22).

Second Coming of Christ

It is because the faithful Christian has the presence of the living Christ in his life that he enjoys the hope of eternal life in heaven. ". . . Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). "Because I live," said the Lord, "ye shall live also" (John 14:19). But for the faithful Christian to receive his heavenly inheritance, it is necessary in the divine plan for Christ to come again. Until this happens, the saving program of the New Testament dispensation will not have been completed.

Consider the following passages that emphasize the necessity of Christ's second coming in regard to the eternal destiny in heaven of His faithful ones: "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; *they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life*; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28,29); "But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world . . ." (Matthew 25:31-34).

Happy and joyous indeed will be the status of the faithful ones who are either alive or resurrected at the Lord's second advent. Before the departure of Jesus from the earth, He promised to return and take his faithful disciples to their heavenly home: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2,3).

This promise of eternal salvation for the Lord's faithful disciples in connection with His second coming is also expressed in the following passages: "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The hope the faithful Christian has concerning the second coming of Christ is virtually synonymous with his hope of heaven. As he looks forward to eternal life in heaven, with the sense of great peace, joy, comfort, and hope he will exclaim, "Come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

"For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself" (Philippians 3:20,21).

An understanding, loving belief in the Lord's second coming will tend to purify the life. Such faith in the inevitability of the Lord's second coming to receive us unto Himself in the heavenly mansions brings the power to prepare for it. It was this faith that made such a meaningful contribution to Paul's remaining loyal to the Master. Note how the apostle connects his upright, faithful life to love for the Lord's appearing, or second coming, and to the subsequent receiving of the crown of righteousness: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

Note how 1 John 3:2,3 connects the purification of one's life with his hope of the Lord's second coming: "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is. And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Yea, verily, the hope faithful Christians have of Christ's coming again to take them to heaven causes them to be loyal to the Master in the face of temptations, persecutions, and adversities. Note the following passage: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter 1:3-9).

As long as the Christian remembers that Christ is coming again and thus keeps his eyes fixed on the heavenly crown, with Christ abiding in his heart, nothing can swerve him from the path of duty and fidelity. "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Colossians 3:1-4).

"Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:1).

"Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, a

hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us" (Hebrews 6:17-20).

The Heavenly Glory

What will heaven be like? To this question and all similar ones we are constrained to answer that *we do not know*; that is, not precisely or literally. We must recognize that the Biblical descriptions of heaven are in terms of physical, earthly things. There is no way possible for us to have any idea at all concerning things we have never seen except in terms of things we have seen. Thus the apostle John has described heaven in terms of the loveliest, most valuable things we can know about in the physical world where we now live (Revelation 21:9-27; 22:1-5). The crux of the matter is that if the things which John uses to describe heaven are marvelously, beautifully, enrapturously glorious, how much more is the reality of heaven marvelously, beautifully, enrapturously glorious.

That the glory of heaven can only be fully comprehended when faith shall end in sight is affirmed in 1 Peter 5:1, where the Christian is described as "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." See Romans 8:18. Every Christian who has contemplated the beauty of a gorgeous sunrise or sunset, the grandeur of a star-spangled sky, the majesty of a snow-capped mountain, etc., can have a foretaste, but only that, of the infinitely greater glory that awaits him in heaven. ". . . that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10). "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory . . ." (Hebrews 2:10).

What will make heaven so especially glorious is the presence of the Father and His Son. Concerning the Father, the divine word pictures His glory as the light of heaven, thus making heaven the realm of eternal day, ". . . the holy city Jerusalem . . . having the glory of God . . . And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it . . . And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 21:10,11,23; 22:5).

The heavenly glory of the Son is referred to in such passages as 1 Timothy 6:14-16, ". . . our Lord Jesus Christ: which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal." See Hebrews 2:9; Revelation 21:23; John 17:24.

In a sense, faithful Christians share in the divine glory here as partakers of the divine nature, but how much more glorious shall they be when their immortal souls will reside forever in the bodies that will be

resurrected unto eternal life at the second coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:40-44,49)! Jesus said, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43). What a beautiful description of the glory of redeemed souls in heaven, as they partake of the celestial glory of Christ, who is "the sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2)!

To be forever happy in the glorious realm of heaven: that is the spiritual legacy of every faithful Christian! *"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he saith: Write: for these words are faithful and true. And he said unto me, They are come to pass. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Revelation 21:1-7).*

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