

Give us this day our
**DAILY
GOOD
NEWS**

A.T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner

Volume 2

Three Months of Spiritual Food for Daily Reading

PREFACE

Volume 1 of this series has met with an enthusiastic welcome from thousands of readers. Selected and condensed from articles and books by Jones and Waggoner, these capsule messages demonstrate a power that explains why their messages so stirred their readers and listeners a century ago. Many of you have written us testifying that you have not found a trace of Bad News in these messages—only “most precious” *Good News*, page after page.

We commend Volume 2 to these happy readers with the prayer that again this collection may bring spiritual healing and renewed courage to many people. Whether you read each day’s message for personal reading, for family worship, or for group devotionals, may each page lift someone’s spirit in a time when so many millions of people long for some meaningful Good News.

—*Glad Tidings Publishers*

*The original material has been condensed
to make the message more clear and understandable.
There has been no change in the meaning.*

*Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture texts are from the
New King James Version.*

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“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined [tried] in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see” (Revelation 3:18).

What is tried? Faith. Are you to expect your faith to endure that test as gold passing through fire? Yes.

The trial of your faith, I care not how weak it may be, is more precious in the sight of our Wonderful Counselor than all the gold and jewels in all the safe deposit vaults that are on earth.

What does He call it? “More precious than gold that perishes” (1 Peter 1:7). Let us then thank Him that He regards our weak, trembling faith like that. Haven’t we there one of the greatest possible encouragements that the Lord can offer?

You say, “I haven’t any faith.” Well, the Lord says you have, and I say, thank Him for what you have. I do not care how little you have, though it be like the mustard seed, thank Him that you have it, and thank Him that it is more precious to Him than all the gold and wealth of this earth. That is the way the Lord regards your faith.

You are not to question whether you have faith or not. God says you have it, and it is so. By that “Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world” (John 1:9), God has planted faith in every heart that is born into this world. God will cause that faith to grow exceedingly, and He will reveal His righteousness to us as it grows “from faith to faith.”

Where does faith come from? God gave it to us. Who is the Author of faith? Christ, and that Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world is Jesus Christ. This is the faith that is in every man’s heart. If each one uses the faith which he has, he will never have any lack of faith.

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.... The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psalm 46:1, 2, 7).

Do you not remember way back in olden times they had cities of refuge? When some accident happened, as when an ax flew off the handle and struck a man and killed him, what was the man to do? He was to strike out with all his might for the city of refuge.

If he got in there, he was safe and he was perfectly free. But suppose he went out of town? Just as certain as he went out he was responsible, his blood was upon his own head. He was safe [only] as long as he stayed in the refuge. And he was to stay there until the high priest died. When the high priest died, he was perfectly free, and could go anywhere.

We have sinned. What are the wages of sin? Death. Then who is after us? Death. Who had the power of death? Satan. Then who is after us? Satan. And we “have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18).

Where is that hope? “In Christ.” Who is our city of refuge? “Christ.” Who is our enemy? “Satan, death.”

Now then, when we are in Christ, our refuge, can Satan touch us? He cannot.

Suppose we go out before the priesthood closes, what then? We have no protection and [Satan] will take us. Where is a person only able to meet the enemy? In the city. And in the city he does not have to meet the enemy, does he? The walls of the city meet the enemy. That shield of faith that quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked, that shield of faith which is Jesus Christ, is the walls of our city of refuge, and the fiery darts of the enemy cannot get past it at all.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. . . . for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:5, 13).

Jesus tells us to buy of Him “gold refined [tried] in the fire,” which is the faith which works by love, the genuine article. What is it that is to be tried with severe trials? Your faith which is “more precious than gold.” Then, you see, as everyone’s faith is to be so tried, he needs the faith that has stood the trial.

We have the testimony: “Here are those who keep the commandments of God and” have faith in Jesus? (Rev. 14:12). No, the “have” is not there. They keep the commandments of God and [keep] the faith of Jesus. That is the genuine article; that is the faith which, in Him, endured the test. That is the faith which met every fiery trial that Satan knows with all the power that he could rally. That faith endured the test.

So, in the expression “buy from me that faith that has endured,” is there not the same thought that we have learned in “this mind . . . which was also in Christ Jesus”? (Phil. 2:5). When that “mind” is in me that was in Him, will not that mind do in me precisely what it did in Him? How is it that we serve the law of God? “With the mind I myself serve the law of God” (Rom. 7:25). Christ in this world every moment served the law of God. How did He do it? With the mind. By what process of the mind? By faith. Did not the faith of Jesus keep the commandments of God perfectly, all the time? And is not that the faith that works by love?

Isn’t that the third angel’s message when He says, “Buy from Me gold refined [tried] in the fire [love and faith], and white garments [the righteousness of Christ], that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed”? (Rev. 3:18). We see how the mind that was in Christ will stand all of the trials that this world can bring. Will the mind of Christ in Him do differently from the mind of Christ in me or in any other person? No.

“For thus says the Lord: ‘You have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money’” (Isaiah 52:3).

When we sold ourselves, what did we get? We sold ourselves for nothing. And if it costs us anything to get back, that means everlasting ruin, does it not? “You have sold yourselves for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.” It cost the Lord something, however. It cost Him everything. But all this He gives us, so that it costs us nothing. The price was paid, but not by us.

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat” (Isa. 55:1). Whoever has no money, He will attend to the buying, He will see that we get the article.

“Buy from me . . . white garments that you may be clothed” (Rev. 3:18). The description that we have is, “that garment that is woven in the loom of heaven, in which there is not a single thread of human devising.” That garment was woven in a human body—the flesh of Christ, in the same flesh that you and I have, for He took part of the same flesh and blood that we have. That was the loom in which God wove that garment for you and me to wear in the flesh, and He wants us to wear it now, as well as when the flesh is made immortal in the end!

What was the loom? Christ in His human flesh. What was made there? The garment of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ—the life that He lived—that is the garment. He wants that garment to be ours, but does not want us to forget who is the Weaver. It is not ourselves, but it is He who is with us. His character is to be in us, just as God was in Him, and His character is to be woven and transformed into us through these sufferings and temptations and trials which we meet. God is the Weaver, but not without us. It is the cooperation of the divine and the human—the mystery of God in you and me—the same mystery that was in the gospel. That is the third angel’s message.

“We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

The gospel of God is “concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3). Read the history of David, and of the kings who descended from him, and who became the ancestors of Jesus, and you will see that on the human side the Lord was handicapped by His ancestry as badly as anybody can ever be. Many of them were licentious and cruel idolaters. Although Jesus was thus compassed with infirmity, He “committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22). This is to give courage to people in the lowest conditions of life. It is to show that the power of the gospel of the grace of God can triumph over heredity.

As with Christ, so with us; it is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom. He who fears reproach, or who makes his lowly birth, or his inherited traits, an excuse for his shortcomings, will fail of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus Christ went to the lowest depths of humiliation in order that all who are in those depths might, if they would, ascend with Him to the utmost heights of exaltation.

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (1 Peter 4:1, 2).

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3).

There is a common idea that this means that Christ simulated sinful flesh; that He did not take upon Himself actual sinful flesh, but only what appeared to be such. But the Scriptures do not teach such a thing.

“In all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). He was “born of a woman, born under the law, . . . that he might redeem those who were under the law” (Gal. 4:4, 5).

He took the same flesh that all have who are born of woman. A parallel text to Romans 8:3, 4 is found in 2 Corinthians 5:21. The former says that Christ was sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh, . . . that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us.” The latter says that God “made Him . . . to be sin for us,” although He knew no sin, “that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

All the comfort that we can get from Christ lies in the knowledge that He was made in all things as we are. Otherwise we should hesitate to tell Him of our weaknesses and failures. The priest who makes sacrifices for sins must be one who “can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also beset by weakness” (Heb. 5:2).

This applies perfectly to Christ; “for we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). This is why we may come boldly to the throne of grace for mercy. So perfectly has Christ identified Himself with us, that He even now feels our sufferings.

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:5).

Note that this depends on the preceding statement, “that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:4). The things of the Spirit are the commandments of God, because the law is spiritual. The flesh serves the law of sin (see Gal. 5:19-21, where the works of the flesh are described). But Christ came in the same flesh, to show the power of the Spirit over the flesh. “Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom. 8:8, 9).

Now no one will claim that the flesh of a person is any different after his conversion from what it was before. Least of all will the converted person himself say so; for he has continual evidence of its perversity. But if he is really converted, and the Spirit of Christ dwells in him, he is no more in the power of the flesh. Even so Christ came in the same sinful flesh, yet He was without sin, because He was always led by the Spirit.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). The flesh never becomes converted. It is enmity against God; and that enmity consists of opposition to His law. But Christ is our Peace. In His own flesh He abolishes the enmity, so that all who are crucified with Him are at peace with God; that is, they are subject to His law, which is in their hearts.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

The “therefore” refers [in Romans 4] to Abraham’s faith in the promise that he should have a son—the child of faith. But the same faith that resulted in the birth of Isaac, also brought righteousness to Abraham. Therefore, the righteousness of faith is as real as was the son that was born to him through faith.

What is peace? Most people have the idea that it is a sort of ecstatic feeling. They think that peace with God means an indescribable heavenly feeling. They always look for that imaginary feeling as evidence that they are accepted with God.

But peace with God means the same thing that it means with people: it means simply the absence of war. As sinners we are enemies of God. He is not our enemy, but we are His enemies. He is not fighting against us, but we are fighting against Him. How then may we have peace with Him? Simply by ceasing to fight, and laying down our arms. We may have peace whenever we are ready to stop fighting.

Note that when we have peace with God we are not simply at peace with Him, but we have His peace. This peace has been left on the earth for us; for the Lord has said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you” (John 14:27). He has given it to us. It is ours, therefore, already. It has always been ours. The only trouble has been that we have not believed it.

As soon as we believe the words of Christ, then we have in very deed the peace which He has given. And it is peace with God, because we find the peace in Christ, and Christ dwells in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18).

“Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Who ever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Righteousness is peace, because our warfare against God was our sins that we cherished. But God has promised to place an end to our warfare; to place enmity between us and our sins (see Gen. 3:15; Isa. 40:1, 2).

God’s life is righteousness, and He is the God of peace. Since the enmity is the carnal mind and its wicked works, peace must be the opposite, namely, righteousness. So it is simply the statement of an obvious fact, that being justified by faith we have peace with God. The righteousness that we have by faith carries peace with it. The two things cannot be separated.

The question is asked, “Can one have peace with God and not have a feeling of peace?” What says the Scripture? “Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Rom. 5:1). What brings the peace? The faith. But faith is not feeling. If there must be a certain feeling with peace, then if we did not have that feeling we should know that we were not justified; and then justification would be a matter of feeling, and not of faith.

Peace must come by faith. Peace that depends on feeling will depart as soon as we begin to feel tribulation. But nothing can make any difference with the peace that comes by faith.

“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Timothy 1:15).

The reason why “hope does not disappoint” is “because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 5:5). Note that it does not say love for God, but the love of God.

What is the love of God? “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3). The Holy Spirit, then, puts into our hearts obedience to the law of God; and it is that which gives us boldness in the day of judgment, and at all other times. It is sin that makes us afraid. When sin is taken away, then fear is gone. “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1).

“This man receives sinners” (Luke 15:2). Strange that people will allow a sense of their sinfulness to keep them away from the Lord, when Christ came for the one purpose of receiving and saving them. He is “able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through him (Heb. 7:25); and He says that those who come to Him He “will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).

It was when we were still without strength that Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6), because He died for the purpose that we might be strengthened with might by the Spirit. If He waited for us to gain some strength before giving Himself for us, then we should be lost. When were we without strength? Just now; and even now Jesus Christ is set forth “evidently crucified” among us (Gal. 3:1, KJV). “Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45:24).

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die ” (Romans 5:7).

Our English translation does not indicate the difference between the two words used here. The righteous man is the just man, the man who is careful to give everyone his due. The good man is the benevolent man, the one who has done us many favors, and who does for us more than we could justly claim. Now, no matter how just a man may be, his integrity of character would scarcely lead one to die for him. Yet it is possible that for a man of great kindness “someone would even dare to die.”

That is the highest measure of love among us. One may lay down his life for his friends, “but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners [therefore enemies], Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

God does not need to be reconciled to us, but we need reconciliation to Him. And He Himself, in the kindness of His heart, makes the reconciliation. We are “made near by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). How so? Because it was sin that separated us from Him, and made us enemies; and “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Being cleansed from sin, we must necessarily be reconciled to God.

In that Christ shed His blood us, He gave His life for us. But inasmuch as the blood is applied to us, to cleanse us from all sin, He gives His life to us. In the death of Christ therefore we are crucified with Him. We receive His life as a substitute for our sinful life, which He takes upon Himself.

“From first to last this has been the work of God. He has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing [margin, “reckoning”] their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

“I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, . . . think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith” (Romans 12:3).

There is comfort in all God’s exhortations and commandments, since He does not expect us to act in our own strength but in His. When He utters a command, it is but the statement of what He will do in and for us, if we yield to His power. When He reproves, He is simply showing to us our need, which He can abundantly supply.

Pride is the enemy of faith. The two cannot live together. A man can think soberly and humbly only as the result of the faith that God gives. “Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4). The one who has confidence in his own strength and wisdom will not depend upon another. Trust in the wisdom and power of God comes only when we recognize and acknowledge our own weakness and ignorance.

That faith which God deals to us is indicated in Revelation 14:12: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” God does not give faith to the saints only, any more than He gives the commandments to them alone; but the saints keep the faith, and others do not. The faith which they keep is the faith of Jesus; therefore it is the faith of Jesus that is given to us.

“Man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ” (Gal. 2:16).

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11, 12).

Everyone is exhorted to think soberly, because God has dealt to every person the measure of faith. Many people have a notion that they are so constituted that it is impossible for them to believe. That is a grave error. Faith is just as easy, and just as natural, as breathing. It is the common inheritance of all people, and the one thing wherein all are equal. It is as natural for the child of the infidel to believe as it is for the child of the saint. It is only when people build up a barrier of pride about themselves (Psalm 73:6) that they find it difficult to believe. And even then they will believe; for when people disbelieve God, they believe Satan. When they disbelieve the truth, they greedily swallow the most flagrant falsehoods.

We have seen that faith is given to everyone (Rom. 12:3). This may be known also by the fact that salvation is offered to everyone, and placed within his grasp, and salvation is only by faith. If God had not given faith to everyone, he could not have brought salvation within the reach of all.

The question is, in what measure has God given each one faith? This is really answered in the fact already learned, that the faith which He gives is the faith of Jesus. The faith of Jesus is given in the gift of Jesus Himself, and Christ is given in His fullness to each one. He tasted death for everyone (Heb. 2:9). “To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph. 4:7). Christ is not divided; therefore to every person is given all of Christ and all of His faith. There is but one measure.

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:7, 10).

When Christ shed His blood for us, He gave His life for us inasmuch as the blood is applied to us to cleanse us from all sin. In the death of Christ therefore, if we are crucified with Him, we receive His life as a substitute for our sinful life, which He takes upon Himself.

Our sins are remitted through faith in His blood, not as an arbitrary act, but because by faith we exchange lives with Him, and the life which we get in exchange has no sin. Our sinful life is swallowed up in His boundless life, because He has life so abundantly that He can die because of our transgressions, and still live again to give life to us.

Christ did not go through the pangs of death for nothing, nor did He give His life to us for the purpose of taking it away again. When He gives us His life, He designs that we shall keep it forever. How do we get it? By faith. How do we keep it? By the same faith. “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col. 2:6). His life can never end, but we may lose it by unbelief.

Let it be remembered that we don’t have this life in ourselves, but “this life is in his Son.” We keep the everlasting life by keeping Christ. People sometimes say that they can believe that God forgives their sins, but they find it difficult to believe that He can keep them from sin. Well, if there is any difference, the latter is the easier of the two; for the forgiveness of sins requires the death of Christ, while the saving from sins requires only His continued life.

Think what was in the life of Christ. As we have the record in the New Testament, we shall know what ought to be in our lives now. If we allow Him to dwell in us, He will live just as He did then. If there is something in our lives that was not then in His, we may be sure that He is not living it in us now.

“All alike have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendour, and all are justified by God’s free grace alone, through His act of liberation in the person of Christ Jesus. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: (Rom. 3:23, 24, NEB, NKJV).

The great burden of the Epistle to the Romans is to show that so far as sin and salvation are concerned, there is absolutely no difference between people of all races and conditions in life.

People are fond of imagining that what are called “shortcomings” are not so bad as real sins. So it is much easier for them to confess that they have “come short” than that they have sinned and done wickedly. But since God requires perfection, it is evident that “shortcomings” are sins. When perfection is the standard, it makes no difference in the result, how much or how little one comes short, so long as he comes short. The primary meaning of sin is “to miss the mark.”

From the text we learn that the glory of God is His righteousness. Notice, the reason why all have come short of the glory of God is that all have sinned. Man in the beginning was “crowned with glory and honor” (Heb. 2:7) because he was upright. In the fall he lost the glory, and therefore now he must “seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (Rom. 2:7). Christ could say to the Father, “The glory which You gave Me I have given them” (John 17:22), because in Him is the righteousness of God which He has given as a free gift.

In Christ we are “being justified,” in other words, being made righteous. To justify means to make righteous. God supplies just what the sinner lacks. Let no reader forget the simple meaning of justification. Some people have the idea that there is a much higher condition for the Christian to occupy than to be justified. That is to say, that there is a higher condition for one to occupy than to be clothed within and without with the righteousness of God. That cannot be.

“We judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died. . . . Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 17).

We are made righteous “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:24). That is, through the purchasing power that is in Christ Jesus, or through “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8). This is the reason why it comes to us as a gift.

Some one may say that everlasting life in the kingdom of God is too great a thing to be given to us for nothing. So it is, and therefore it had to be purchased. But since we had nothing that could buy it, Christ has purchased it for us and He gives it to us freely, in Himself.

But if we had to purchase it from Him, we might as well have bought it in the first place, and saved Him the task. “If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Gal. 2:21). “You were not redeemed with corruptible [margin, “perishable”] things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18, 19). The redemption that is in Christ Jesus is His own life.

Christ is the one whom God has set forth to declare His righteousness. Now since the only righteousness that is real righteousness is the righteousness of God, and Christ is the only One who has been ordained of God to declare it upon men, it is evident that it cannot be obtained except through Him. “There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

The scene on Calvary was the manifestation of what has taken place as long as sin has existed, and will take place until everyone is saved who is willing to be saved: Christ bearing the sins of the world. He bears them now. One act of death and resurrection was sufficient for all time, for it is eternal life that we are considering. Therefore it is not necessary for the sacrifice to be repeated. That life is for everyone everywhere, so that whoever accepts it by faith has all the benefit of the entire sacrifice of Christ.

“Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, . . . that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:24-26).

A propitiation is a sacrifice. The statement here is simply that Christ is set forth to be a sacrifice for the remission of our sins. “Once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26).

Of course the idea of a propitiation or sacrifice is that there is wrath to be appeased. But take particular notice that it is we who require the sacrifice, and not God. He provides the sacrifice. The idea that God’s wrath has to be propitiated in order that we may have forgiveness finds no warrant in the Bible.

It is the height of absurdity to say that God is so angry with people that He will not forgive them unless something is provided to appease His wrath, and that therefore He Himself offers the gift to Himself, by which He is appeased.

The heathen idea, which is too often held by professed Christians, is that men must provide a sacrifice to appease the wrath of their god. All heathen worship is simply a bribe to their gods to be favorable to them. If they thought that their gods were very angry with them, they would provide a greater sacrifice, and so human sacrifices were offered in extreme cases. They thought that their god was gratified by the sight of blood.

Ecclesiastical leaders imagine that salvation is by works and that by works we can atone for sin. This is but the outcropping of the heathen idea of propitiation. The true God is not pleased with such sacrifices.

“The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with wicked intent!” “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, you will not despise” (Prov. 21:27; Psalm 51:17).

“We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

To declare righteousness is to speak righteousness. God speaks righteousness to man, and then he is righteous. The method is the same as in the creation in the beginning. “He spoke, and it was.”

Christ is set forth to declare God’s righteousness for the remission of sins, in order that He might be just and at the same time the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. God justifies sinners, for they are the only ones who need justification. The justice of declaring a sinner to be righteous lies in the fact that he is actually made righteous. Whatever God declares to be so, is so. And then he is made righteous by the life of God given him in Christ.

The sin is against God, and if He is willing to forgive it, He has the right to do so. No unbeliever would deny the right of a man to overlook a trespass against him. But God does not simply overlook the trespass; He gives His life as a forfeit. Thus He upholds the majesty of the law, and is just in declaring that man righteous who was before a sinner. Sin is remitted—sent away—from the sinner, because sin and righteousness cannot exist together, and God puts His own righteous life into the believer. So God is merciful in His justice, and just in His mercy.

This act of mercy on the part of God is eminently just, because in the first place the sin is against God, and He has a right to pass by offenses against Him. Further, it is just, because He gives His own life as an atonement for the sin, so that the majesty of the law is not only maintained, but is magnified. God is just and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. All righteousness is from Him alone.

Righteousness is the free gift of God to everyone who believes. True faith has Christ alone as its object, and it brings Christ’s life actually into the heart; and therefore it must bring righteousness.

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. . . . Come, and let us return to the Lord. . . . Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord” (Hosea 4:6; 6:1, 3).

It is commonly said that knowledge is power. That depends. If we take the statement of the poet, that “the proper study of mankind is man,” then certainly knowledge is anything but power. Man is nothing but weakness and sin.

All people know that they are sinners, that they do things that are not right, but that knowledge gives them no power to change their course. You may tell a person all his faults, and if you tell him nothing more, you have weakened rather than strengthened him.

But he who with the apostle Paul determines to know nothing “except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2) has knowledge that is power. “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). To know Christ is to know the power of His endless life. It is for lack of this knowledge that people are destroyed (Hosea 4:6). But since Christ is the power of God, it is quite correct to say that power is the one thing that we need; and the only real power is revealed in the gospel.

All the power of earth is frail and but for a moment, while the power of God is eternal. If people would but recognize the gospel for what it is, there would not be any who would be ashamed of it. Paul said, “God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14). The reason for this was that the cross is the power of God (1 Cor. 1:18). The power of God, in whatever form manifested, is glory, and not for shame.

“We proclaim Christ—yes, Christ nailed to the cross; and though this is a stumbling-block to Jews and folly to Greeks, yet to those who have heard His call, Jews and Greeks alike, He is the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23, 24, NEB).

“By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. “With the heart one believes to righteousness” (Rom. 10:10). “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29). Faith works.

Time would fail to tell of those “who through faith subdued kingdoms, working righteousness, obtained promises, . . . out of weakness were made strong” (Heb. 11:33, 34). People may say, “I cannot see how it is possible for one to be made righteous simply by believing.” It makes no difference what you can see; you are not saved by sight, but by faith. You do not need to see how it is done, because it is the Lord who does the work of saving. Christ dwells in the heart by faith (Eph. 3:17), and because He is our righteousness, “He also has become my salvation” (Isa. 12:2).

If when the preaching of the gospel reveals to us the law of God, we reject it and find fault with it because it condemns our course, we are simply saying that we do not desire that God should put His own righteousness upon us. But, as we receive Him by faith, and we walk in Him as we have received Him, we shall “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

If in anyone who has sought righteousness through Christ there is afterward found sin, it is because the person has dammed up the stream, allowing the water to become stagnant. Where there is no activity there is death. No one is to blame for this but the person himself. Let no professed Christian take counsel of his own imperfections and say that it is impossible for a Christian to live a sinless life. It is impossible for a true Christian, one who has full faith, to live any other kind of life.

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

When people try to handle the law of God, they invariably pervert it, and fit it to their own ideas. The only way to have its perfection appear is to submit to it, allowing it to rule. Then it will work itself out in the life. “It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

We have seen that the end or object of the law is the righteousness which it requires. So it is said that Christ is the end of the law [for those] “who know righteousness.” The law of God is the righteousness of God (see Isa. 51:6, 7). But this righteousness is the real life of God Himself, and the words of the law are only the shadow of it. That life is found only in Christ, for He alone declares the righteousness of God (Rom 3:24, 25).

His life is the law of God, since God was in Him. That which the Jews had only in form is found in fact only in Christ. In Him the end of the law is found. Does any one say that “the end of the law” means its abolition? Very well; when they find the abolition of Christ, they will have found the abolition of the law, and not before. Only a study of the life of Christ will reveal the righteousness which the law of God requires. “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill” (Matt. 5:17).

The perfect righteousness of the law is found only in Him. It is in Him in absolute perfection. Therefore since Christ dwells in the heart of the believer, in Him only is the end of the law attained. “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29). “With the heart one believes to righteousness” (Rom. 10:10).

“That I may... be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, righteousness which is from God by faith” (Philippians 3:8, 9).

The righteousness which is of the law, that is, our own righteousness, is on the principle of doing something in order to live. The mere statement of the case is sufficient to show its impossibility; for life must necessarily precede action. A dead body does not do something in order that it may live, but it must be given life in order that it may do something.

Peter did not tell the dead Dorcas to do some more charitable work, to sew some more garments, in order that she might live, but in the name of Jesus he restored her to life in order that she might pursue her good works. The man that does those things shall live in them, but he must first live before he can do them.

Therefore the righteousness which is of the law is but an empty dream. Christ gives life, even the eternal and righteous life of God, which works righteousness in the soul that it has quickened. “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

We read, “The word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (Deut. 30:14), that is, the word of faith, which we preach. Is Christ so near as that? Indeed He is; for He Himself says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock” (Rev. 3:20). It is not alone to the good that He is near, but He is “not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27).

We cannot reach out our hand without finding Him. Christ is in [near] the heart even of wicked people, waiting for them to recognize the fact that already exists, and will in all their ways acknowledge Him. Then He will dwell in their hearts “by faith.” He will then direct them in all their ways. In nothing is the love of Christ more fully shown than in His dwelling with sinful men, and enduring all their hatefulness, in order that by His patience He may win them from their evil ways.

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

The great thought and purpose of the true sanctuary, its priesthood and ministry, is that God shall dwell in the hearts of the people. What now is the great thought and purpose of His dwelling in the hearts of the people? The answer is, perfection; the moral and spiritual perfection of the worshiper.

Therefore, since (a) the will of God is the sanctification and the perfection of the worshipers; and (b) since the will of God is that His worshipers shall be so cleansed that they shall have no more conscience of sin; and (c) since the service and the offerings in that earthly sanctuary could not do this, He took it all away that He may establish the will of God. “By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10).

The will of God is “even your sanctification.” Sanctification is the true keeping of all the commandments of God. This is to say that the will of God concerning us is that His will shall be perfectly fulfilled in us.

The sacrifices and the service in the earthly sanctuary could not take away the sins of people and so could not bring them to this perfection. But the sacrifice and the ministry of the true High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary do accomplish this. This does utterly take away every sin. And the worshiper is so truly purged that he has no more conscience of sins.

By the sacrifice, the offering, and the service of Himself, Christ took away the earthly sacrifices and the offerings and the earthly service which could never take away sins. By His perfect doing of the perfect will of God He established the will of God.

“In the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets” (Revelation 10:7).

The cleansing of the sanctuary and the finishing of the mystery of God are identical as to time. In the “figure of the true” in the sanctuary, the round of service was completed annually, and the cleansing of the sanctuary was the finishing of that figurative service.

The finishing of this earthly work of the sanctuary was also the finishing of the work for the people. For in that day which was the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 16:29-33), whosoever of the people did not by searching of heart, confession, and putting away of sin take part in the service of the cleansing of the sanctuary was cut off forever (Lev. 23:27-29).

And this was all “a figure for the time then present” (Heb. 9:9, KJV). The earthly sanctuary and its sacrifice, priesthood, and ministry were a figure of the true, which is the sanctuary and ministry of Christ. The cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was a figure of the true, which is the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary from all the sins of the believers in Jesus. And the time of this cleansing of the true is declared by the Wonderful Numberer to be, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed” (Dan. 8:14).

Indeed, the sanctuary of which Christ is the High Priest is the only one that could be cleansed in 1844, because it is the only one that there is. “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still” (Rev. 22:11).

“[Christ] has appeared once and for all at the climax of history to abolish sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is the lot of men to die once, and after death comes judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the burden of men’s sins, and will appear a second time, sin done away, to bring salvation to those who are watching for Him” (Heb. 9:26-28, NEB).

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through . . . His flesh, . . . let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Perfection in every respect is attained through the service of our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.

This is the “new and living way” which Christ “consecrated for us”—for all mankind—by which every soul may enter into the holiest of all.

This new and living way He “consecrated for us through His flesh.” Coming in the flesh, identifying Himself with mankind in the flesh, He has consecrated a way from where we are to where He now is, at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

Having been made in all things like unto us and having been tempted in all points like as we are (Heb. 2:14; 4:15), He has identified Himself with every human soul just where that soul is. And from the place where every human soul is, He has consecrated for that soul a new and living way through all the vicissitudes and experiences of a whole lifetime, and even through death and the tomb, into the holiest of all, at the right hand of God for evermore. “For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11).

Oh that consecrated way! Consecrated by His temptations and sufferings, by His prayers and tears, by His holy living and sacrificial dying, by His triumphant resurrection and glorious ascension, and by His triumphal entry into the holiest of all, at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens!

“Therefore having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Having become one of us, He has made this “consecrated way” our way; it belongs to us. He has endowed every soul with divine right to walk in this consecrated way, and by His having done it Himself in the flesh—in our flesh—He has made it possible that every human soul can walk in that way.

As one of us, in our sinful human nature in this world, for a whole lifetime He lived a life “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26). By this He has made a way by which, in Him, every believer for a whole lifetime can live a life holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and as a consequence be made with Him higher than the heavens.

Perfection of character is the Christian goal—perfection attained in human flesh in this world. Christ attained it in human flesh in this world, and thus consecrated a way by which every believer can attain it in Him, He has become our great High Priest, and the High Priesthood and ministry of Christ in the true sanctuary is the only way by which any soul can attain this true goal. “Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary” (Psalm 77:13).

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him since he ever lives to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

“When the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5).

Anyone in all the world who knows guilt knows also what Jesus felt for him. And by this he knows how close Jesus has come to him. Whoever knows what condemnation is [also] knows exactly what Jesus felt for him, and how thoroughly Jesus is able to sympathize with him and to redeem him. Bearing guilt, under condemnation, and under the weight of the curse, Jesus lived the perfect life of the righteousness of God without ever sinning at all for a whole lifetime in this world of guilt, condemnation, and the curse.

Anyone knowing guilt and knowing also that Jesus actually felt in His experience all this just as he feels it, by believing in Jesus he can know the blessedness of the perfect righteousness of God in his life.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). His being made a curse is not in vain: it accomplishes all that was intended by it in behalf of everyone who will receive it.

“In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.... And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:7, 9).

“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

The time will come when he who stands to his allegiance to the third angel’s message will have the penalty of death pronounced upon him. His life will be declared forfeited by the powers of this earth.

Then can any question of life come into our calculations now? Shall one weigh up what his life is worth now, and weigh anything in his calculations as to whether he is going to stand by the third angel’s message or not?

When all earthly support and protection are taken away, when all questions of reputation (which the world thinks so much of) are taken away with all questions of property or business of any kind, and when all questions of life are taken away, how much is left? None. Then it is time for everyone of us to begin to think very seriously indeed.

But thank the Lord, we need not be a bit afraid of our enemy. The Lord will never allow one to be shut up in a place where he does not expect to take us out a great deal more gloriously than if we had never got in there. The Lord does not call upon you or me to forfeit anything, but that in the place of it He will give us that which is worth infinitely more. When He calls upon us to stand in allegiance to His truth, which shuts off from us all considerations of earthly support or protection, then He simply says, “Here is all the power of heaven and earth for you.” Here is the covering of the Almighty drawn over you. “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27). “Be not afraid” That is His word, is it not? Let us go on our way with singing then.

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10).

Christ gives a character which He Himself wove from infancy to the grave, complete in every respect. Then let us receive it.

Then we need not be afraid of oppression or difficulties, or whether we can buy or sell anything at all, because the Lord has something so much better. That is the character, and that is the covering that He draws over His people so that the [seven last] plagues cannot touch them, and no power of the enemy can overcome or defile it. Thank the Lord!

When He calls upon you and me to take a position in allegiance to His law, which will forfeit our lives, which will put our lives in jeopardy, what then? Well, He simply says, let that life go. It will vanish away in a little while anyway. Here is life that will last through all eternity. “This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11).

Has He given it to us? “He that has the Son” will have life some time? “He that has the Son has life.” Is Christ dead? No. He is alive. So, when we have Him, we have the life that is in Him. What kind of life is in Him?—Eternal life only. Then when I have Him, I have the life which is His, and that is eternal life, just as He says.

We cannot have that life without yielding up this one. Yield up this life and you will get one that is a great deal better. Now is the time. But if I cling to this life, when it is gone, what have I left? Nothing.

When the test comes that this life is at stake, the man or woman who has only this life will stick to it. That’s the danger. One can’t go through what the third angel’s message must go through, with only this life that he has. Because it is all he has, he will stick to it when it is brought into jeopardy. But he who will let this life go, count it worth nothing, and take that life which is the life of God, will have a life that can never get into jeopardy. That person is safe.

“We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:12, 13).

Instead of the power of earth that we cannot depend upon, and which is decidedly set against us, God gives us the power of God. Instead of reputation, God gives us character. Instead of earthly riches, houses, lands, property, business considerations, or anything of the kind, God gives us Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and “you are complete in Him” (Col. 2:10).

God has appointed Him to be heir of all things, and we are “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Rom. 8:17). He is heir of all things, and we are joint heirs. Then how much belongs to us? All things. Then what have we? All things that God has. Then are we not rich?

Instead of this life which the powers of earth would take away, God gives us His life. When He asks us to take a position in allegiance to Him and His cause, the Lord simply says, “Here is eternal life to start with.”

Then, has not the Lord fully armed us? O, then let us have on the armor of God now. Be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. That is where the Lord wants us to stand, and that is what He wants us to do. And He says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Heb. 13:5). Now, what are you going to do? “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Joshua 24:15), and which course you will take.

“Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance (Matthew 9:13).

God sent forth His Son, “born of woman,” and, therefore, a real man. He lived and suffered all the ills and troubles that fall to the lot of man. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14). Christ always designated Himself as “the Son of man,” thus forever identifying Himself with the whole human race. The bond of union can never be broken.

Being “born of woman,” Christ was necessarily born “under the law,” for such is the condition of all mankind. “In all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). He redeems us by coming into our place literally and taking our load off our shoulders. “He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

In the fullest sense of the word and to a degree seldom thought of when the expression is used, He became man’s substitute. That is, He identifies Himself so fully with us that everything that touches or affects us, touches and affects Him. We cast our cares on Him by humbling ourselves into the nothingness that we are and leaving our burden on Him alone.

We must acknowledge that we are, or were before we believed, “under the law.” For Christ came to redeem none but those who were under the law. To be “under the law” means to be condemned to death by the law as transgressors. The law condemns none but those who are accountable to it and ought to keep it. Since Christ redeems us from condemnation of the law, it follows that He redeems us to a life of obedience to it.

“That hope . . . is like an anchor for our lives, an anchor safe and sure. It enters in through the veil, where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner” (Heb. 6:19, 20, NEB).

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” Galatians 1:3, 4).

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Gal. 3:13.) Some who superficially read this rush off frantically exclaiming, “We don’t need to keep the law, because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of it,” as though the text said that Christ redeemed us from the curse of obedience. Such read the Scriptures to no profit.

The curse is disobedience: “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to do them” (see Gal. 3:10). Therefore Christ has redeemed us from disobedience to the law. God sent forth His Son “in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin. . . . in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom. 8:3, 4).

Someone may lightly say, “Then we are all right; whatever we do is right so far as the law is concerned, since we are redeemed.” It is true that all are redeemed, but not all have accepted redemption. Many say of Christ, “We will not have this Man to reign over us,” and thrust the blessing of God from them. But redemption is for all. All have been purchased with the precious blood—the life—of Christ, and all may be, if they will, free from sin and death.

Stop and think what this means. Let the full force of the announcement impress itself upon your consciousness. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law”—from our failure to continue in all its righteous requirements. We need not sin any more! He has cut the cords of sin that bound us so that we have but to accept His salvation to be free from every besetting sin. It is not necessary for us any longer to spend our lives in earnest longings for a better life. Christ comes to the captives of sin and cries to them, “Liberty! Your prison doors are open. Go forth” (see Isa. 61:1).

What more can be said? Christ has gained the complete victory over this present evil world, over “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16), and our faith in Him makes His victory ours.

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16).

The Galatians, having accepted the gospel, were led astray by false teachers who presented to them “a different gospel” (Gal. 1:6), a counterfeit gospel, since there is but one for all time and for all men.

The counterfeit gospel was represented in these words: “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Now, although there is in these days no question as to whether or not one should submit to the specific rite of circumcision in order to be saved, the question of salvation itself, whether by human works or by Christ alone, is as alive as ever.

Instead of attacking their error and combating it with hard argument, the apostle begins with an experience which illustrates the case in hand. In this narrative he shows that salvation is wholly by faith for all alike, and not in any degree by works. As Christ tasted death for everyone, so everyone who is saved must have Christ’s personal experience of death and resurrection and life. Christ in the flesh does what the law cannot do (Gal. 2:21; Rom. 8:3, 4).

But that very fact witnesses to the righteousness of the law. If the law were at fault, Christ would not fulfill its demands. He shows its righteousness by fulfilling or doing what it demands, not simply for us but in us. We do not “set aside [nullify] the grace of God.” If righteousness could come by the law, “then Christ died in vain.”

Let it be repeated, righteousness cannot possibly come by the law, but only by the faith of Christ. Disobedience, rejection of the Lord, is the spirit of antichrist. Only by keeping close to the word of God can we be kept from the temptation that is coming on all the world. The gospel of Christ which reveals the righteousness of God is the only possible salvation from it (see Rom. 1:16, 17).

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” (Galatians 3:1).

When Paul preached to them, Jesus was set forth before the Galatians as openly crucified before their eyes. So vivid was the presentation that they could actually see Him crucified. It was not only skillful word painting on the part of Paul and imagination on the part of the Galatians. Through Paul the Holy Spirit enabled them to see Him crucified.

This experience of the Galatians cannot be peculiar to them. The cross of Christ is a present thing. The expression, “Come to the cross,” is not an empty form of words, but an invitation that can be literally complied with.

Not until one has seen Christ crucified before his eyes, and can see the cross of Christ at every turn, does one know the reality of the gospel. Many there are who can testify that it is something more than a figure of speech when the apostle says that Christ was crucified before the eyes of the Galatians. They too have had the experience.

The question, “Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:2) admits of but one answer. It was by hearing with faith. The Spirit is given to those who believe (John 7:38, 39; Eph. 1:13). The question also shows that the Galatians had received the Holy Spirit. There is no other way of beginning the Christian life. “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3).

No works that one can do can bring Him into the soul, any more than a dead man can manufacture the breath by which he can be made to live and move. Those to whom Paul addressed this letter had seen Christ crucified before their eyes and had accepted Him through the Spirit. Have you also seen and accepted Him?

“Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness” (Romans 4:9).

The Spirit was ministered and miracles were wrought, not by works of law, but by “hearing with faith,” that is, by the obedience of faith, for faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Thus Paul’s labor, and the first experience of the Galatians, were exactly in line with the experience of Abraham, whose faith was accounted for righteousness.

Let it be remembered that the “false brethren” who preached “a different gospel” (Gal. 2:4, 1:6), even the false gospel of righteousness by works, claimed Abraham for their father. It would be their boast that they were “children” of Abraham, and they would appeal to their circumcision as proof of the fact. But the very thing upon which they relied as proving them to be children of Abraham was proof that they were not; for “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3). Abraham had the righteousness of faith before he was circumcised (Rom. 4:11). “Know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). Abraham was not justified by works, but his faith wrought righteousness (Rom 4:2, 3).

The same trouble still exists. People take the sign for the substance, the end for the means. They see that righteousness reveals itself in good works. Therefore they assume that the good works bring the righteousness. Righteousness gained by faith, good works wrought without working, seem to them impractical and fanciful. They call themselves “practical” people and believe that the only way to have a thing done is to do it. But the truth is that all such are highly impractical.

One “without strength” cannot do anything, not even so much as to raise himself up to take the medicine that is offered him. Any counsel for him to try to do it would be impractical. Only in the Lord is there righteousness and strength (Isa. 45:24). Abraham is the father of all who believe for righteousness, and of those only. The only “practical” thing is to believe, even as he did.

“Those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’” (Galatians 3:9, 10).

Note the sharp contrast in verses 9 and 10, “Those who are of faith are blessed,” but “as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.” Faith brings the blessing. Works bring the curse, or, rather, leave one under the curse. The curse is on all, for “he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). Faith removes the curse.

Who are under the curse? “As many as are of the works of the law.” Note that it does not say that those who do the law are under the curse, for that would be a contradiction of Revelation 22:14: “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.” “Blessed are the undefiled [margin, “blameless”] in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord!” (Psalm 119:1).

So, then, they who are of faith are keepers of the law. Since the gospel is contrary to human nature, we become doers of the law not by doing but by believing.

If we worked for righteousness, we would be exercising only our own sinful human nature, and so would get no nearer to righteousness, but farther from it. But by believing the “exceedingly great and precious promises,” we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), and then all our works are wrought in God.

“[The] Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame’ (Rom. 9:30-33).

“Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves . . . having a form of godliness but denying its power.” “They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him” (2 Timothy 3:1, 2, 5; Titus 1:16).

The Jews followed after the law of righteousness, but did not attain to it. Why? “Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law” (Rom. 9:32).

How forcefully this sets forth that of which the entire Epistle to the Romans is a demonstration—that faith does not clear one from its transgression, but that by faith alone can the law be kept!

The Jews are not blamed for following after the law of righteousness, but for not following after it in the right way. It is not by works but by faith that the works which the law requires can be attained. There is no discount upon good works. They are the most necessary things in the world. They are the result of the keeping of the law by faith. But there cannot be good works without faith; for “whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

But the Jews came miserably short of it. Why? “For they stumbled at that stumbling stone” (Rom. 9:32). What stumbling stone? Christ. They were in the very same condition that so many people are today, they would not believe that the promises of God to Israel were wholly and solely in Christ.

That very stumbling stone is a stepping stone, and a sure foundation. That over which some fall is the means of lifting up and building up others. Christ is a rock of offense to those who disbelieve, but a sure foundation to those who have faith. He is “the Shepherd of Israel” (Psalm 80:1) and at the same time the fold, and the door into the fold.

Whoever comes not in at the door, the same will be proved to be “a thief and a robber” (John 10:1). But “whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame” (Rom. 9:33), because his faith will show him to be Abraham’s seed, and thus an heir of God according to the promise.

“He who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse” (Gal 3:10). Why? Because the law is a curse? Not by any means: “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12). The “curse of the law” is transgression of the law. Disobedience to God’s law is itself the curse, for “just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin” (Rom. 5:12). Sin has death wrapped up in it. Without sin death would be impossible, for “the sting of death is sin” (1 Cor. 15:56).

Why, then, are all who rely on works of the law under a curse? Because “cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.”

They are not cursed because they do the law, but because they do not do it. So, then, we see that relying on works of the law does not mean that one is doing the law. No! “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). All are under the curse, and he who thinks to get out by his own works, remains there. Since the “curse” consists in not continuing in all things that are written in the law, therefore the “blessing” means perfect conformity to the law.

“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God” (Deut. 11:26-28). This is the living word of God, addressed to each one of us personally. “The law brings about wrath” (Rom. 4:15), but the wrath of God comes only on the children of disobedience (Eph. 5:6). If we truly believe, we are not condemned, because faith brings us into harmony with the law, the life of God.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28, 29).

All creation speaks of Christ, proclaiming the power of His salvation. Every fiber of man’s being cries out for Christ. People do not realize it, but Christ is “the Desire of All Nations” (Haggai 2:7). He alone satisfies “the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:16). Only in Him can relief be found for the world’s unrest and longing.

Christ is seeking the weary and heavy laden, and calling them to Himself. Everyone has longings that nothing else in the world can satisfy. It is clear that if one is awakened by the law to keener consciousness of his condition, and the law continues goading him, giving him no rest, shutting up every other way of escape, he must at last find the door of safety, for it stands open.

Christ is the “city of refuge” to which everyone pursued by the avenger of blood may flee, sure of finding a welcome (see Num. 35). In Christ alone will the sinner find release from the lash of the law, for in Christ the righteousness of the law is fulfilled, and by Him it is fulfilled in us (Rom. 8:4). The law will allow nobody to be saved unless he has “the righteousness of God which is through faith,” the faith of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22).

“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Whenever one receives the word of God, the word of promise, and no longer fights against it but yields to it, faith comes to him. The eleventh chapter of Hebrews shows that since the days of Abel people have found freedom by faith. Faith can come now, today. “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Heb. 3:7).

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:17, 18).

Before faith came we were confined under the law, “shut up” unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. We know that whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). Therefore, to be “under the law” is identical with being under sin.

The grace of God brings salvation from sin, so that when we believe God’s grace we are no longer under the law, because we are freed from sin. Those who are under the law therefore are the transgressors of the law.

Christ says, “I am the door” (John 10:9). He is also the sheepfold and the Shepherd. Men fancy that when they are outside the fold they are free, and that to come into the fold would mean a curtailing of their liberty; but exactly the reverse is true. The fold of Christ is “a large place,” while unbelief makes a narrow prison. Outside of Christ is bondage. In Him alone there is freedom. Outside of Christ, one is in prison, “caught in the cords of his sin” (Prov. 5:22).

It is the law that declares one to be a sinner and makes him conscious of his condition. It forms the sinner’s prison walls, making him feel uncomfortable, oppressing him with a sense of sin, as though they would press his life out. While he makes frantic efforts to escape, those commandments stand as firm prison walls. Whichever way he turns he finds a commandment which says to him, “You can find no freedom by me, for you have sinned.”

If he promises to keep the law, he is no better off, for his sin still remains. It goads him and drives him to the only way of escape. In Christ he is made “free indeed,” for in Christ he is made the righteousness of God. In Christ is “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25).

“The Helper [margin, “Comforter”], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to” (John 14:26).

The sinner can have but a narrow range of thought. The true free thinker is the one who comprehends “with all saints what is the width and length and depth and height” of “the love of Christ which passes knowledge” (Eph. 3:18, 19).

One must feel his need before he will accept help; he must know his disease before he can apply the remedy. The promise of righteousness will be utterly unheeded by one who does not realize that he is a sinner. The first part of the “comforting” work of the Holy Spirit therefore is to convince us of sin.

So “the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Gal. 3:22). “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). He who knows that he is a sinner is in the way to acknowledge it; and “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Thus the law in the hands of the Spirit is an active agent in inducing us to accept the fullness of the promise. No one hates someone who has saved his life by pointing out to him an unknown peril. On the contrary, such a one is regarded as a friend, and is always remembered with gratitude. Even so will the law be regarded by the one who has been prompted by its warning voice to flee from the wrath to come. He will ever say with the psalmist, “I hate the double-minded, but I love Your law” (Psalm 119:113).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9).

Sin is a personal matter in the heart. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within” (Mark 7:21-23). Sin is in every fiber of our being by nature. We are born in it, and our life is sin, so that sin cannot be taken from us without taking our life.

What I need is freedom from my own personal sin—that sin which not only has been committed by me personally, but which dwells in the heart, the sin which constitutes all of my life. Shall I cast it on the Lord? Yes, that is right; but how? Can I gather it up in my hands and cast it from me, so that it will light upon Him?

If I could separate it but a hair’s breadth from me, then I should be safe, no matter what became of it, since it would not be found in me. In that case I could dispense with Christ. For if sin were not found on me, it would make no matter to me where it was found. It would then be away from me, and I would be cleared. But nothing that I can do can save me. Therefore all my efforts to separate myself from my sins are unavailing. My sin is committed by myself, in myself, and I cannot separate it from me.

All anyone has to do in order to be saved is to believe the truth; that is, to recognize and acknowledge facts, to see things just as they actually are, and to confess them. Whoever believes that Christ is crucified in him, risen in him, and dwells in him, is saved from sin. And he will be saved as long as he holds to his belief. This is the only true confession of faith.

“Scripture says, ‘Everyone who has faith in Him will be saved from shame’—everyone: there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, because the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich enough for the need of all who invoke him” (Rom. 10:11, 12. NEB).

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then . . . joint heirs with (Romans 8:16, 17).

Do we look to the law for righteousness, even after we have been brought to Christ? Where do we look? In the face of Jesus Christ. There “we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

Then don’t you see how the righteousness of God and the Holy Spirit go hand in hand? When we obtain the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ, then the Holy Spirit cannot be kept away from us. The two belong together. Then He says we have a right to ask for the Holy Spirit.

He came “to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:5, 6). He does not want to hold it back. He sends it into the heart. It is a free gift.

It is impossible to keep the righteousness of God and the Holy Spirit separate. So then, “transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord,” when the image of God in Jesus Christ is found in us, what then? There is the impress, the seal of God.

By looking into the face of Jesus Christ and there alone, we receive the righteousness of God which is by faith in Him. The effect of looking into His glorious face is to change us into the same image, and restore it in us by the working of the Spirit of God upon the soul. And when that is done, then the same Spirit of God is there to affix the seal of the living God, the eternal impress of His own image.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” (Galatians 3:13).

Why did Christ become a curse on the tree? Why did He redeem us from the curse of the law? That the blessing of Abraham might come on you and me.

What is the blessing of Abraham? Righteousness by faith. Christ died that you and I might be made righteous by faith. Isn't it awful when someone will rob Christ of the very thing for which He died, and want righteousness in some other way? Let us believe in Jesus Christ.

We are redeemed from the curse of the law; Christ is made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come, “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14). When the individual believes in Jesus Christ and obtains the righteousness which is by faith, then the Holy Spirit, which is the circumcision of the heart, is received by him.

When we as a people, we as a body—as a church—have received the blessing of Abraham, what then? The latter rain; the outpouring of the Spirit. When the whole people as a church receive the righteousness of faith, the blessing of Abraham, then what is to hinder the church from receiving the Spirit of God? Nothing. That is where we are [1893].

What is to hinder, then, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? What holds back the outpouring? Unbelief. Our lack of the righteousness of God, which is by faith—that is what holds it back, for when that is received it is given in order that we may receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Then let us be sure we have the blessing of Abraham, and then ask and we shall receive.

“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. . . . that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:2, 5).

The password into the heavenly society is “Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” That is all that you and I have any business to know anything about. That is His message to the world. That is the passport.

“What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something of which to boast, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness’” (Rom. 4:1-3). What was it that was accounted to Abraham for righteousness? He believed God. When God said a thing, Abraham believed it. He said, “that is so.” “And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it [his faith] to him for righteousness” (Gen 15:6).

Now do you believe that Abraham became righteous in just that way? Honestly now, do you? Do you know that it was as simple a transaction as that? Suppose the Lord called you and me out tonight. No, He can do it without calling us out. He called Abraham outdoors to show him the stars, but He can show us sins without calling us outdoors.

Has He shown you a great many sins? Now He says, If you are able to number them, “they shall be white as snow.” What do you say? Amen. Then what does the Lord say? “You are righteous.” Are you? Do people become righteous as easy as that? Is it as simple a transaction as that? Yes, amen. Thank the Lord!

The only thing that can keep you and me out of the kingdom of God is to tell the Lord that He lies.

“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ ” (Romans 5:17).

What is righteousness in that verse? A “gift.” “Their righteousness is from Me, says the Lord” (Isa. 54:17). He who receives it as the gift that it is, receives what? Righteousness. According to what? God’s idea of righteousness.

Will He give us anything other than that which is righteousness in His own sight and according to His own mind? No. Then he who does not receive the righteousness of God as the free gift of God, does He have it? No, and he cannot have it, because it is a gift of God.

And therefore it being of God, and He giving it of His own gift, it is left to me to get it in His own way according to His own idea. The genuine article is the righteousness of God alone.

Don’t you see that there can be no room for a single thread of human invention? What ample provision the Lord has made that we may have the perfect robe which He Himself has woven! It is the righteousness of God itself! It will make us complete now, and in the time of the plagues, and in every other time, and throughout all eternity.

What is the latter rain? Righteousness. Are we in the time of the latter rain [1893]? Yes. What are we to ask for? The teaching of righteousness according to righteousness. Where is it to come from? Heaven. Can we have it now? Yes.

Then the latter rain being the righteousness of God, His message of righteousness, the loud cry that is to come down from heaven—we are now in the time of it, we are to ask for it, and receive it.

Then what is to hinder us from receiving the latter rain now? Unbelief.

“Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Timothy 4:1).

There is another development in Satan’s working in the last days, separate from paganism, and separate from the papacy. Spiritualism. Yes, and this will exalt self.

But will spiritualism always work in the name of Satan? No. The nearer we come to the second coming of the Saviour the more fully spiritualism will be professing Christ.

Who is it that comes before the Saviour comes? False christs. And at last Satan himself comes—as Satan? No. As Christ. He is received as Christ.

The people of God must be so well acquainted with the Saviour that no profession of the name of Christ will be received or accepted where it is not the actual, genuine thing. But when false Christianity is presenting itself to the world, when every kind of a false christ appears, then how alone can a person be safe? How shall one know that these are false? Only by Him who is the true; only by having His “mind” itself.

We have seen the manifestation of the natural mind—the carnal mind—in two of its ways: paganism and the papacy. At last we will have before us the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. And then there will be no shadow of an excuse for any one of us after that in taking any position but that which is openly and itself alone the mind of Jesus Christ, and the righteousness of God according to His idea of righteousness.

When we see before us the direct expression of the false way in all three of its forms, then we will know that well enough to let it alone. Would we not rather let the devil go that we see, and accept the Lord that we cannot see as we would like to? I would rather take the Lord with my eyes shut, than the devil with my eyes open.

"For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:23).

Spiritualism is only another name for ancient witchcraft and soothsaying. It is a fraud, but not the kind of fraud many people think it is. There is reality in it.

It is a fraud in that while it professes to receive communications from the spirits of the dead, it has communication only with the spirits of devils, since "the dead know nothing" (Eccl. 9:5). To be a spiritualist medium is to give one's self to the control of demons.

Now there is only one protection against this, and that is to hold fast to the word of God. He who lightly regards God's word severs himself from association with God, and puts himself within Satan's influence. Even though a person denounces spiritualism in the strongest terms, if he does not hold to God's word he will sooner or later be carried away by the strong false-christ delusion. Only by keeping close to the word of God can people be kept from the temptation that is coming on all the world (see Rev. 3:10).

Stubbornness and rebellion are rejection of God. And he who rejects God puts himself under the control of evil spirits. All idolatry is devil worship. There is no middle ground. Christ says, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. 12:30). That is, disobedience, rejection of the Lord, is the spirit of antichrist.

"There were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction" (2 Peter 2:1).

"Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is therefore a simple thing for his agents to masquerade as agents of good" (2 Cor. 11:15, NEB).

"Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him and led them up a high mountain where they were alone; and in their presence He was transfigured; his clothes became dazzling white, with a whiteness no bleacher on earth could equal" (Mark 9:2, 3, NEB).

The transfiguration was a miniature representation of the coming of the Lord in glory, to raise the righteous dead, and to translate the living. Ever after that memorable day, the coming of the Lord must have been a more vivid reality to Peter, James, and John, than it had been before.

The "glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13) is the "blessed hope" that is set before the church of Christ. It has been the hope of the church in all ages.

That Christ will come again is as sure as that He was once here upon earth, and that He is now "gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him" (1 Peter 3:22).

"I will come again" (John 14:3) means "another time, once more." Not thousands of times, as they would have us believe who claim that He comes whenever a saint dies, but only once more will He come again to consummate the great plan of salvation.

The apostle bears emphatic testimony in these words: "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Heb. 9:27, 28).

Why will He come? Because if He should not come the second time, His first coming would have been in vain. Said He, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). He comes to take to Himself the purchase of His own blood.

He has gone to prepare a place for those who become His friends indeed, and when He has the place prepared for them, He will come and take them to it. In vain would be all His sufferings for us; in vain would be the faith which we have placed in Him, if He should not return to complete that which He has begun.

“God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 1:27, 28).

“Christ in you, the hope of glory”—that is the gospel. There is no need of a particle of misunderstanding about this question of faith and works. Christ was in the world once, wasn't He? He did not do anything of Himself. “I can of Myself do nothing” (John 5:30). The Father dwelt in Him. He did the works. “The Father who dwells in Me does the works” (John 14:10). “As the Father has sent me, I also send you” (John 20:21).

As God was in Christ, Christ is to be in us. Is Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever? Yes, He is. How did He act when He was on earth, in our flesh that He had? He went about doing good; He cared for the sick, sympathized with them. How will He act when He is in our flesh now? He will act the same way.

Don't you see then how that the works take care of themselves in Him who has faith in Jesus Christ? I do not mean satanic belief. I mean the person who has faith. Then don't you see what those people miss who get their minds on works more than on Christ? They miss the very incentive and the very power that alone can do the things that are good. It is Christ in you. And when He goes with you and in you, there stands the testimony, “It will win even from worldlings the statement, ‘They are like Jesus.’”

Is there need of anyone misunderstanding whether righteousness is by faith? Justification by faith carries with it, in itself, the very living virtue of God to work in God's way.

The mind that is yielded to God and wants to have God's way—Christ first and last—will then become so acquainted with Christ that he knows that faith in Jesus Christ brings that divine presence and that divine power. Why, you cannot separate it. The divine life is in it; the divine power is in it; the divine word is in it.

“You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:19, 20).

The person who is so anxious and so dreadfully afraid that you will not let him have any works to do, that you are going to destroy all his works, will find works to do—if Christ is in his heart. Don't be so anxious about works; find the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will find work, more than you can do!

When people get their minds on works, works, and works, instead of on Jesus Christ in order to work, they pervert the whole thing. Satan does not care how much one professes justification by faith, and righteousness by faith, so long as he keeps his mind on works.

In this definition of faith we read: “When we speak of faith there is a distinction that should be borne in mind. There is a kind of belief that is wholly distinct from faith. The existence and power of God, the truth of His word, are facts that even Satan and his hosts cannot at heart deny.” Satan “believes,” but what power does his believing bring to him to make him righteous, or to enable him to do good works? None.

No, it is away off there, simply as a theory, held off to look at, held as a theory, as a creed. An [evil] spirit, even, can believe in the existence and power of God. He can believe the truth of the Bible. He can believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Holy One of God, and yet be a devil.

Do not think that the person who says that he rests wholly upon Christ is either a physical or a spiritual loafer. If he shows this loafing in his life, he is not resting on Christ at all, but on his own self. That is faith that will bring to you the outpouring of the latter rain.

“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

A man can be a great stickler for what he calls “good works.” Yes, he can work the very skin off his bones in order to be good, in order to be righteous, in order to move God.

But who is doing the work? Self does the work in order to be righteous, in order to have that treasure of merit that will give an increase of grace in this world and an increase of glory in heaven. Has the mind, has the heart been yielded to God? Are the affections fixed upon Him? Is the surrender of all to Him? No. And therefore it is still self in all.

Who then is to do the work in order that it may be good works always? Let us read again: “If Christ is dwelling in our hearts, He will work in us ‘both to will and to do for His good pleasure.’ We shall work as He worked; we shall manifest the same spirit. And thus, loving Him and abiding in Him, we shall ‘grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ’ (Eph. 4:15).”

Now, then, that is what the Lord wants, that is what the mind of Christ is. I cannot have the mind of Christ separate from Him, without having Him personally. But the personal presence of Jesus Christ is just what He wants to give us by the Holy Spirit in the outpouring of the latter rain just now.

“Be keener than ever to work out the salvation that God has given you with a proper sense of awe and responsibility. For it is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purpose” (Phil. 2:12, 13, Phillips).

“All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children. In righteousness you shall be established” (Isaiah 54:13, 14).

The idea that we can hold the truth away off and look at it as a theory, and put our own construction on it and our own interpretation into it, and then go about of ourselves to do what we believe—this is not faith.

Here is faith: “Where there is not only a belief in God’s word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him.”

Now these are weighty expressions, worth considering. The “submission of the will to Him.” Is it done? Is your will submitted to Him, never to be taken back, or exercised in your own way, or for yourself?

“Well,” says one, “I have been trying to submit my will to Him.” Well, stop your trying, and submit your will to Him. Be done with it and know it. You can know whether that is done. How? By telling the Lord it is done, and it is so.

If one does not know it, that is the strongest possible evidence that it is not done. And when it is done, ah, he knows it. When it is done he knows what he never knew before in his life. The “natural man” cannot receive it, he cannot understand it.

“They shall all be taught by God” (John 6:45). One can tell another what he knows is a fact. But no one can give it to another, so that my brother can get it from me. I can tell him it is a fact, and that he can know it, but he must learn it from God, simply by yielding to God. That is the only way anyone can do it or know it.

“It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me” (John 6:45).

Now, is your will submitted to God for Him to use as He pleases? You have no objection to raise, no thought or inclination to use it your way? You want His way, and that is all you care for?

You just go and tell the Lord all about it. Tell Him, “Lord, I submit everything to Thee; everything goes, nothing stays. I do not retain a single thing; all is gone; everything, will and all—to Thee, that Thou mayest use it both to will and to do.” We need to do just that, each day. The Lord wants to come in here; that will let Him in.

But as long as I reserve some of my will, I will go my way in spite of myself; I cannot have God use me fully. Christ cannot come in fully, unless there is a full submission to Him.

Let there be some actual dying to self. That is what it means; it means death. Of course people never struggle to die. They struggle to stay alive, if there are any struggles.

Bear in mind that it is not enough to “want” to die. Go ahead and die; that is what the Lord wants. Says one, “How shall I do that?” He tells how: “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed” (Rom. 6:11). Dead indeed! “He who has died has been freed from sin” (vs. 7). It is so.

“Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin,” and God will furnish the fact.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:4, 5).

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19).

“Well,” says one, “I have yielded all I know.” Well, now just take the other step, and yield all you do not know.

When a person does that, is he poor, and miserable? And naked and blind? And does not know it? I say, Yes, of course he is. But, thank the Lord, he has riches that embrace the universe. Says one, “I cannot understand that.” I cannot either, but I know it is a fact.

Let us bear this in mind and never forget it: The further you go the more you will see that when we get hold of the gospel of Jesus Christ just as it is, we find in every phase of it the mystery of God. At every point and in every turn you find a place and a situation in which all you can do is to believe that God is there. Let Him go ahead and explain it. It will take eternity to do that.

What He wants you and me to do is to be glad that we have eternity before us for Him to explain it to us. God forbid that we should throw away eternal life because we cannot understand all that God understands. But, ah, there is the same spirit again that Satan had—to be equal with God and not submit unless we can understand all.

Let that mind be put away. And let us believe the Lord, and let Him take His own good time to explain it.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23, 24).

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called. . . . till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:1, 13).

Many say, “I have surrendered to the Lord all I know.” That is not enough. What you want to do is to surrender to Him all you know and all you do not know.

When I surrender to Him only what I know, there are a good many things left that I do not know, a good many situations will come up and I will meet something very attractive and desirable to me, and if I have not surrendered all, what then? There will be a contest, whether I will surrender or not. So I am kept constantly in hot water to know whether I am surrendered to the Lord or not. The Lord wants you to get out of the hot water and stay out.

Surrender everything you know and everything you do not know. Let everything go to Him, with no reservation now or evermore. Then you are not afraid of anything; you do not care if you drop into the bottom of the sea the next minute. It is all surrendered; you are in His hands—and then you have something. That person has something; he has something he never had before, something that he cannot get until he does just that thing.

“The affections fixed upon Him.” Are your affections fixed there, so that He takes precedence of everything? So that He is first before everything? Nothing at all coming into the account anywhere or at any time? Is that so? When one does that, he has something.

Then we simply wait the direction of the Lord. When the Lord gets ready to pour out His Holy Spirit, there is nothing to hinder. If there be something that one does not know, well, that was surrendered long ago. It may be as dear as the right eye, but that went long ago, so there is nothing between you and Him, and He can pour out His Spirit whenever He pleases. That is where He wants you and me to stand.

“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity” (Ephesians 2:13-15).

How much of Christ are we to have?

He will be closer than if He would come in [physically] to this meeting with us every day. The righteousness of God is by faith of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel, “for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17).

“Oh, no! The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to works!” No, “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to FAITH.” Thank the Lord.

“Did not Paul strive,” says one, “and does not the Saviour say ‘strive to enter through the narrow gate’ (Luke 13:24)”? Yes, He does, and Paul tells us how in Colossians 1:25 and onward: the gospel “of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints” (vss. 25, 26).

What is it that God wants to make known at this time to you and me? “The riches of the glory of this mystery.” How great are the riches of the glory of the mystery of God? As great as God. Then how can we know them except by the mind of Christ, which is brought to us by the Holy Spirit bringing His presence [by faith]?

“Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily” (vss. 27-29).

“I shall ask the Father to give you someone else to stand by you, to be with you always. I mean the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, for it can neither see nor recognize that Spirit” (John 14:16, Phillips).

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

It is plain that if one is to get righteousness he must get it from outside himself. He must, in fact, be made into another person. He must have a life entirely different from his natural life. This is dimly recognized in the frequently expressed desire to “live a different life.” That is just what everyone needs to do.

The trouble is that so many try to live another life with the old life of sin, and that is impossible. In order for one to live a different life from what he has been living, it is necessary to have a different life.

One’s life is just what his ways are, and all God’s ways are right. The law of God expresses His ways. His ways are as much higher than our ways as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Now the righteousness of God is something that we may have. The Saviour said to His disciples, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). But where are we to seek for it? In Christ, because God has made Him for us “wisdom . . . and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

It is in Him that we may be “made” the righteousness of God. But since God’s righteousness is His life, it is impossible for us to have His righteousness without having His life. This life is in Christ, for Christ is God, and “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19). The only life ever lived on this earth that was perfectly righteous was the life of Christ. His life alone could resist sin. “You know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin” (1 John 3:5). The life of Christ is the righteousness of God. It is that which we are to seek.

“Everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened” (Luke 11:10).

“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God . . . are manifest” (1 John 3:9, 10).

Man cannot live God’s life. Only God can live His own life. It would be the height of presumption for anyone to think that he could live the life of God. The life of God must be manifested in man, if he has any righteousness, but God Himself must live the life.

The apostle Paul expresses it thus: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Note again how easy it is for one to set himself up as above God. Since righteousness is life, even the life of God, it is evident that for one to claim that he has life in himself,— that he has by nature in himself a principle that cannot die,— is the same as saying that he has righteousness in himself, and thus to claim indirectly that he is God. This again is “the man of sin” (2 Thes. 2:3).

It was this feeling that kept the Pharisees from accepting Christ. They “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” (Luke 18:9). They professed to believe in eternal life and searched the Scriptures with that in view; but Jesus sadly said to them, “You are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:40). Why would they not come to Him? They thought they had it in themselves.

Christ came to this earth for the sole purpose of giving life to men, for they had forfeited life by sin. He gives His life to us, and that gives us His righteousness. The only reason why anyone will not come to Christ for life is that he thinks that he has it already. Again we repeat, that whoever claims that one may have eternal life without Christ, thereby claims that one may have righteousness without Christ. The two must go together.

“You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:2, 3).

This life in us is the only way of righteousness. We are to “become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). This life is ours by faith, for “the just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). That does not mean that the life is not real, but that it can be retained only by faith.

As the life is received, so must it be retained. “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him” (Col. 2:6). Man does not have this life in his own right, and within his own power. It is the life of God, and not the life of man. “This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11, 12). It is the “life of Jesus . . . manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor. 4:11).

This life is “the light of men” (John 1:4). This life of righteousness is given to us as freely as the light of day. It is as abundant as the [sunlight; there is enough for all. A characteristic of light is that it can multiply itself. A single torch may light a thousand other torches, and still have as much light as in the beginning.

So it is with the light of Christ’s life. With Him is the fountain of life. It comes from Him in abundance. He can give life to everyone in the world, if they would all receive it, and still have as much left as in the beginning.

He can live in His fullness in every person. “Is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13). No. Everyone who believes gets the benefit of the entire life of Christ.

“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:16-18).

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile” (Psalm 32:1, 2).

As sin is darkness, so sin is death. “To be carnally minded is death,” for “the sting of death is sin” (Rom. 8:6; 1 Cor. 15:56). Sin and death come from Satan, for it is he who has the power of death. The darkness of this world is the darkness of sin, and that is the darkness of the shadow of death. Those who sit in sin, sit in the shadow of death; and the light that springs up to such is the light of Christ’s sinless life.

As sin is death, so righteousness is life. To be spiritually minded is to have the mind of the Spirit of God, and that is to have His life and righteousness. It is to have the law of God in the mind, “for we know that the law is spiritual” (Rom. 7:14). The only thing that can dispel darkness is light. So the only thing that can take away sin is righteousness. And the only thing that can overcome death is life.

Those who sit in the shadow of death, which is the shadow that sin casts, may have that shadow dispelled by allowing the light to shine in. That light is to be manifested in its fullness in the church before the end, so that the life of Christ will be manifested before the world as plainly as when Christ was here on the earth in person.

This will be the standard around which thousands will rally, even as they did on the day of Pentecost. It is this light of Christ’s life of which the prophet speaks in these words: “Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people: but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isa. 60:1-3).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17:9, 10).

The life of man cannot gain the victory over death, for it is death itself. Sin is natural to the heart of mankind. But the heart is the seat of life, “for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Therefore, since sin is death, and sin in all its various forms springs from the heart, it follows that the very source of man’s life is poisoned with death. The life of man is but a living death.

The apostle Paul, after bemoaning the utter sinfulness of the natural man, cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24).

Since righteousness, and that alone, is life, man can have no hope of life from himself, for he can get no righteousness from himself. He has only evil in his heart by nature, therefore he can bring forth only that which is evil. The Scriptures give abundant witness to this.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “They have all gone out of the way; . . . there is none who does good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:12). No matter how much the awakened soul may wish that he could do what he knows is right, he has no power in himself to do it.

Since only evil can come from evil, and the heart of man brings forth only evil, it is a denial of the Scripture to claim that man can of himself do any good thing. First, the Bible says that he cannot. Second, whoever says that there is any power in man to do good thereby denies that there is evil in man. There cannot be some evil and some good in man by nature. A fountain cannot send forth both sweet water and bitter. A little poisonous water will taint the entire fountain.

So, if there is any evil in man by nature, he must be, as the Scripture says, wholly evil. Christ has told the truth about man in the words, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried out to my God: He heard my voice from His temple, and my cry came before Him, even to His ears” (Psalm 18:6).

“God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27). “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7).

Like the beasts, he was taken from the ground. He is but “dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). He cannot boast at all, for it is simply by the power of God, who can make of the same clay a vessel unto honor and one unto dishonor, that he is any different from the beasts. The earth is the source whence all animate creatures spring. “All are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Eccl. 3:20).

After death and decomposition the dust of the prince cannot be distinguished from the dust of the pauper. If at the last he does not share the fate of the beasts and go into oblivion, it is only because he has had humility enough to accept the wisdom that comes from God, for “man who is in honor, yet does not understand, is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49:20). “Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?”

Man is made from the dust, that he may remember that he is nothing in himself; but also in the image of God, that he may know the infinite possibilities before him—association with God Himself. Of himself he has no more might than the dust upon which he walks, but is capable of the greatest things through the power and goodness of God. And, strange as it may seem, his capabilities are the greatest when he is most sensible of his weakness. “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

How natural it is for us in extremity to turn for help to some other man, or to human power. And yet no one on earth has the power to make any change in his own physical condition. “Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps truth forever” (vss. 5, 6).

“This is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:11, 12).

It is true that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, but only the righteous will be raised to life. They that have done evil come forth from their graves to the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28, 29). Their lot will be to “be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thes. 1:9). Since they have not the righteousness which alone is life, there is nothing by which their existence can be continued.

All this is to teach us that there is hope only in God; that He is supreme, and that power belongs alone to Him. Not only a single man, but “all nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless” (Isa. 40:17).

But while this should make man humble, it should in no wise discourage him. Indeed, it is for our encouragement, for God made the universe from nothing, and so He can take the person who trusts Him and make of him what He will. To the end “that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the Lord’” (1 Cor. 1:29-31). Surely man should not be ashamed to acknowledge his lowly origin, since through Christ he may do all things (Phil. 4:13).

One more lesson of encouragement may be learned from the frailty of man: only in humility is true exaltation found. Since all things come from God, man can be at his highest state only when he gladly acknowledges that he is nothing and yields to the loving power of God.

“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. . . . but God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:6, 8).

“Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word and my servant will be healed’” (Matt. 8:5-8).

Faith is depending on the word of God only, and expecting that word to do what the word says. Justification by faith, then, is justification by depending on the word of God only, and expecting that word to accomplish it. Justification by faith is righteousness by faith; for justification is being declared righteous.

Faith comes by the word of God. Justification by faith, then, comes by the word of God. Righteousness by faith is righteousness that comes by the word of God.

The word of God is self-fulfilling; for in creating all things, “He spoke, and it was done” (Psalm 33:9). And when He was on earth, He stilled the raging sea, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, raised the dead, and forgave sins, all by His word; there too, “He spoke and it was done.”

The same One who in creating “spoke and it was done” speaks the righteousness of God unto and upon all that believe. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth . . . to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Rom. 3:23-25).

It is this way precisely in our life. In man’s life there is no righteousness which can appear in his life. But God set forth Christ to declare righteousness unto and upon man. Christ has spoken the word only, and in the darkened void of man’s life there is righteousness to everyone who will receive it.

The word of God received by faith produces righteousness in the life where there never was any before. As in the original creation, the word of God produced worlds where there never were any worlds before.

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

God is manifested in creating, by His word. And that word by which He created all things has in it the power to make a thing appear which before could not be seen at all because it was not.

After God spoke, things were seen which before He spoke did not appear at all. Nobody could see them. Then there is power in the word which God in Jesus Christ speaks, that is able to produce the thing which He names. That is, God can call those things which be not as though they were, and not lie (see Rom. 4:17). A man can speak of those things which be not as though they were, but there is no power in his word to produce the thing which he speaks, and consequently he lies.

And there are many people who do that thing. They speak of those things that are not as though they were, but it is a lie. And the reason that it is a lie is that there is no power in them or their word to produce the thing. But God is not such.

The thought that is in His mind, expressed in a word, produces the thing that was in the thought. The creative energy, the divine power, is in the word which God speaks. Consequently, when there were no worlds that appeared, God in Jesus Christ spoke, and there the worlds were, and there they are yet, because He spoke them.

Not only does the word of God produce the thing that is in the thought, but it keeps that thing in existence in the place where God wants it, after it is produced. The word which God shall speak has all that power in it.

What holds these up since they were made? Is it necessary that He should keep on talking all the time to the worlds and the planets to keep them in their courses and in their places? No. The word which produced them in the beginning has in it the creative power which holds them together and holds them up.

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. . . . By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age” (Hebrews 11:8, 11).

When Abraham and Sarah had cleared themselves of the scheme of unbelief which had produced Ishmael, and had stood upon faith alone—dependence on the word of God alone—Isaac, the true child of the promise, was born.

In hearkening to the voice of Sarah (Gen. 16:1, 2), Abraham had swerved from the true faith. And now that he had returned to the word only, to true faith, he must be tested before it could be said of him that “his faith is accounted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

He had trusted the naked word of God and had obtained Isaac, the true child of the promise. And now, having obtained Isaac, the question must be determined whether he would trust the naked word of God as against even Isaac himself.

Accordingly, God said to Abraham, “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, . . . and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you” (Gen. 22:2).

Abraham had received Isaac by trusting the word of God only. After Isaac was born, God had confirmed the word by declaring, “In Isaac your seed shall be called” (Gen. 21:12). And now came the word of God, “Take your son, your only son Isaac, and offer him as a burnt offering.”

But if Isaac is offered as a burnt offering, what will become of the promise, Your seed shall be as the stars of heaven? Yet there stood the word, Offer Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham had trusted the word of God only, as against Ishmael; but this is more than trusting the word as against Isaac—it is trusting the word of God as against the word of God!

And Abraham did it. He did not insist that God should “harmonize these passages.” It was all-sufficient for him to know that the statements were all the word of God. Knowing this, he would trust that word, and would let the Lord “harmonize these passages,” or “explain these texts,” if any such were needed.

“Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ And he was called the friend of God” (James 2:22, 23).

Said Abraham: God has said, and that will I do. I interfered once in the promise, and I repudiated all that I had done, and came back to the word only. Then, by a miracle, God gave me Isaac, the promised seed.

Now He says, Offer Isaac, the promised seed, for a burnt offering. I will do it. By a miracle God gave him at the first; and by a miracle God can restore him. Yet when I shall have offered him for a burnt offering, he will be dead; and the only miracle that can then restore him is a miracle that will bring him back from the dead.

But God is able to do even that, and He will do it; for His word is spoken. Even the bringing back of Isaac from the dead will be to God no more than He has already done; for both my body and Sarah’s were as good as dead, and yet God brought forth Isaac from us. He can raise Isaac from the dead, and He will. Bless the Lord!

“Abraham . . . arose and went to the place of which God had told him” (Gen. 22:3). Abraham expected to offer Isaac for a burnt offering, and then see Isaac rise from the ashes and go back with him. For the word of God had gone forth, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” And Abraham would trust that word only, that it could never fail. (Heb. 11:17-19).

THIS IS FAITH. And thus “the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’” To trust the word of God only, to depend upon the word of God only, even as against the word of God—this is faith. This is the faith which brings the righteousness of God.

“And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided’” (Gen. 22:14).

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1, 2).

“To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

This is the only way that anybody can ever become righteous: first admit that he is ungodly; then believe that God justifies, counts righteous, the ungodly, and he is righteous with the very righteousness of God.

Everyone in the world is ungodly. “Ungodly” means “unlike God.” And it is written, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory [the goodness, the character] of God” (Rom. 3:23). Anyone therefore who will admit that he comes short of being like God in anything, in that confesses that he is ungodly.

But the truth is that everybody, in everything, has come short of being like God. For “they have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:9-18).

Then, as there is no one who is not ungodly, and as God justifies the ungodly, this on God’s part makes justification—righteousness, salvation—full, free, and sure to every soul on earth.

And all that anyone needs to do to make it all sure to himself is to believe that God does justify, personally and individually, him who is ungodly.

Thus, strange as it may sound to many, the only qualification and the only preparation for justification is for a person to acknowledge that he is ungodly. Then, having such qualification, having made such preparation, all that is required of him to obtain justification, full, free, and sure, is to believe that God justifies him, the ungodly one.

“Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace, but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (Romans 4:4, 5).

It is quite easy for many to believe that they are ungodly, and even to acknowledge it; but for them to believe that God justifies them—that is too much.

And the reason why they cannot believe that God justifies them, is that they are so ungodly.

If only they could find some good in themselves, or if only they could straighten up and do better, they might have some courage to hope that God would justify them. Yes, they would justify themselves by works, and then profess to believe in justification by faith!

But that would only take away all ground for justification; for if a man can find good in himself, he has it already, and does not need it from anywhere else. If he can straighten up and do better of himself, he does not need any justification from anywhere else.

It is, therefore, a contradiction in terms to say that I am so ungodly that I do not see how the Lord can justify me. For if I am not ungodly, I do not need to be made righteous: I am righteous. There is no half-way ground between godliness and ungodliness.

But when a person sees himself so ungodly as to find there is no possible ground of hope for justification, it is just there that faith comes in. Indeed, it is only there that faith can possibly come in.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:4-6).

“It was not written for his sake alone, . . . but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:23-25).

Faith is dependence on the word of God only. So long as there is any dependence on himself, so long as there is any conceivable ground of hope for any dependence upon anything in or about himself, there can be no faith: since faith is dependence on “the word only.”

But when every dependence on anything in or about himself is gone, and it is acknowledged to be gone; when everything is against any hope of justification, then it is that throwing himself on the promise of God, upon the word only, hoping against hope, faith enters. And by faith he finds justification full and free, all ungodly though he be.

Forever it stands written, “To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5). “Even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ. . . whom God set forth . . . to demonstrate his righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (3:22, 25).

This is what it is to exercise faith. Are you exercising faith? For understanding how to exercise faith,—this is the science of the gospel.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16, 17).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work ” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The Bible was written for no other purpose than to show the way of life. It contains history and biography, but these are parts of the gospel message. Not one line is written except to reveal Christ. Whoever reads it for any other purpose than to find in it the way of salvation from sin, reads it in vain. Studied in the light of Calvary, it is a delight, and things that would otherwise be obscure are made clear as the noonday.

We shall expect to find things we cannot understand, even as we cannot understand how the infinite God upholds the universe by the word of His power. We believe that which we cannot understand, because God says so. Approaching the study of the Bible thus, we place ourselves where God can unfold and explain to us the mysteries of His word.

The Bible is the word of God, penned by holy men who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This light came as revelation direct from heaven. In the Bible is the message of God’s love for individual sinners. Christ is set forth as the power of God, to the salvation of individuals.

One line runs through the entire Bible, God’s everlasting covenant. Standing at the cross, one can see the working of God’s eternal purpose which He purposed “in Christ Jesus before time began” (2 Tim. 1:9). The history from Paradise lost till Paradise restored is set forth as in a panorama.

The story of God’s love can never be exhausted; it is as infinite as God Himself.

*“Do you not know that . . . you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”
(1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).*

Consecration is simply the constant recognition of the fact that we are the Lord’s and not our own. He who learns that and lives in the constant recognition of it—he is consecrated.

Nor is this a hard thing to do in itself. People make it hard for themselves by thinking it to be what it is not, and trying to accomplish it in a way that is not the Lord’s way. And in truth, going about it in another than the Lord’s way, they cannot possibly do anything else than miss it.

Is it a fact, then, that we are the Lord’s? Of course, for it is written: “You were bought at a price.” And the price is “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). For He “gave Himself for us” (Titus 2:14).

This “price” was paid. “One died for all” (2 Cor. 5:14). Having died for all, having given Himself for all, it is certainly a fact that all are His.

He not only gave Himself for us, but for all there is of us, yes, even for our sins. For again it is written that He “gave Himself for our sins.” And He did it “that He might deliver us from this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4), that He might “purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14), that He might present us “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). In one word, “that He might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3:18).

God so loved us that He wants to save us. But He cannot save us in our sins. He will save from our sins. And as our whole self is sin and sin only, in order to get us, in order to buy us, He had to buy our sins also.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:13, 14).

The curse of the law, all the curse that ever was or ever can be, is simply because of sin. This is powerfully illustrated in Zechariah 5:1-4 (KJV). The prophet saw a “flying roll.” Then the Lord said to him: “This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth.” That is, this roll represents all the curse that is upon the face of the whole earth.

What is the cause of this curse? Here it is: “For everyone that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and everyone that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it” (vs. 3). That is, the roll is the law of God, and one commandment is cited from each table, showing that both tables of the law are included in the roll.

Everyone that stealeth [everyone who transgresses the law in the things of the second table] shall be cut off as on this side of the law; and everyone that sweareth [everyone who transgresses in the things of the first table of the law] shall be cut off as on that side of the law.

Thus the heavenly recorders do not need to write out a statement of each particular sin of everyone; but simply to indicate on the roll that pertains to each one the particular commandment which is violated in each transgression.

Unless a remedy shall be found, that roll of the law will remain until the curse shall consume that person and his house, “with its timber and stones.” That is, until the curse shall devour the earth in that great day when the very elements shall melt with fervent heat. For “the strength of sin is the law” (1 Cor. 15:56).

“These are the words of the Lord of Hosts: See, I will rescue My people. . . . They shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and justice. . . . You . . . have been the very symbol of a curse to all the nations; and now I will save you, and you shall become the symbol of a blessing. Courage! Do not be afraid” (Zech. 8:8-13, NEB).

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Thanks be to God, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). All the weight of the curse came upon Him, for “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,” (2 Cor. 5:21). And whosoever receives Him, receives freedom from all sin, and freedom from the curse.

So entirely did Christ bear all the curse, that whereas when man sinned, the curse came upon the ground and brought forth thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17, 18), the Lord Jesus in redeeming all things from the curse wore the crown of thorns, and so redeemed both man and the earth from the curse. Bless His name. The work is done. He “has redeemed us from the curse.” Thank the Lord. He was made a curse for us, because He did hang upon the tree.

And since this is all an accomplished thing, freedom from the curse by the cross of Jesus Christ is the free gift of God to every soul on the earth. And when one receives this free gift of redemption from all the curse, that roll still goes with him; yet, thank the Lord, not carrying a curse any more, but bearing witness to the “righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference” (Rom. 3:21, 22).

The very object of His redeeming us from the curse is that “the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Jesus Christ” (Gal. 3:14). That blessing of Abraham is the righteousness of God, which can come only from God as the free gift of God, received by faith.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’” (Galatians 3:10).

As “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law” (Gal. 3:13), then He has also redeemed us from the works of the law, which, being our own works, are only sin. By the grace of God He has bestowed upon us the works of God, which being the works of faith, the gift of God, is only righteousness. As it is written: “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent” (John 6:29). This is rest indeed—heavenly rest—the rest of God. And “he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His” (Heb. 4:10).

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘The just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘The man who does them shall live by them.’” (Gal. 3:10-12).

All this in order “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Gal. 3:14). And “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit” (Rom. 8:1-4).

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:16, 17).

As sons of God, these have the mind of the Spirit, the mind of Christ. So, with the mind they “serve the law of God” (Rom. 7:25).

Accordingly, whoever is led of the Spirit of God and has the mind of Christ fulfills the law, because by that Spirit there is shed abroad in the heart the love of God, which in itself is the fulfilling of the law.

On the other hand, whoever is led of the flesh and so has the mind of the flesh, does the works of the flesh, and so serves the law of sin. Whoever is led of the flesh cannot do the good that he would; he serves the law of sin, and so is “under the law” (Rom. 3:19).

Note in the text now under consideration that the flesh, in its true fleshly sinful nature, is still present with the one who has the Spirit of God; and that this flesh is warring against the Spirit.

That is, when one is converted and thus brought under the power of the Spirit of God, he is not so delivered from the flesh that he is actually separated from it with its tendencies and desires, so that by the flesh he is no more tempted and has no more contest. No, that same degenerate, sinful flesh is there, with its same tendencies and desires.

But the individual is no longer subject to these. He is delivered from subjection to the flesh with its tendencies and desires, and now is subject to the Spirit. He is now subject to the power that conquers, brings under, crucifies, and keeps under, the flesh, sinful as it is, with all its affections and lusts.

“Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27).

The contrast between the rule of the flesh and the rule of the Spirit is clearly shown in Romans 7:14-24. Here is pictured a man who is under the power of the flesh, “carnal, sold under sin,” who longs to do good, and wills to do good, but the flesh will not let him do the good that he would.

It describes the man who is subject to the flesh, “to the law of sin” that is in his members. When he would break away and do good, that power still brings him into captivity and holds him under the dominion of the flesh, the law of sin.

But there is deliverance from that power. When he cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” there is given an instant answer: “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (vss. 24, 25). There is the way of deliverance; for Christ alone is the Deliverer.

In the seventh [chapter] of Romans the man is subject to the flesh, but is longing for deliverance. The ninth [chapter] of first Corinthians shows the flesh subject to the man through the new power of the Spirit of God. This blessed reversal of things is wrought in conversion.

By conversion the man is put in possession of the power of God, and under the dominion of the Spirit of God. By that power he is made ruler over the flesh, with all its affections and lusts; and through the Spirit, he crucifies the flesh in fighting his “good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12).

We are not saved by being delivered utterly from the flesh; but by receiving power to conquer, and rule over all the evil tendencies and the desires of the flesh. We do not develop character by being delivered into a realm of no temptation; but by receiving power, in the field of temptation exactly where we are, to conquer all the temptation.

“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” (1 John 5:4).

If we were to be saved by being delivered from the flesh just as it is, then Jesus need never have come to the world. If we were to be saved by being delivered from all temptation, and set in a realm of no temptation, then Jesus need not have come into the world. But never, by any such deliverance as that, could man have developed character.

Therefore, instead of trying to save people by delivering them utterly from the flesh, just where they were, Jesus came to the world, and put Himself in the flesh, just where people are. He met that flesh, just as it is, with all its tendencies and desires; and by divine power which He brought by faith, “He condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

Christ thus brought to all mankind that divine faith which brings the divine power to deliver from the power of the flesh and the law of sin, to give assured dominion over the flesh, just as it is.

Instead of Jesus trying to save people in a way in which they would be limp and characterless, by setting them in a realm of no temptation, He came to man, just where man is in the midst of all his temptations. Jesus came in the very flesh such as man has; and in that flesh, He met all the temptations known to that flesh, and conquered everyone of them. By that conquest, He brought victory to every soul in the world. Bless His name.

Every soul can have that victory in its fullness, who will receive and keep “the faith of Jesus.”

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith OF Jesus” (Rev. 14:12).

“When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectually works in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Without the word of God the life of man is as barren of power and of good as is the earth without rain. Only let the word of God fall upon the heart as the showers upon the earth, then the life will be fresh and beautiful in the joy and peace of the Lord, and fruitful with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.

It is the word of God that must work in you. You are not to work to do the word of God: the word of God is to work in you to cause you to do. There will be powerful work wrought in the individual when the word of God, being living and full of power, is allowed to work in the life.

As this word is the word of God, the power of which it is full is only the power of God. When it is allowed to work in the life, there will be the work of God manifest in the life—it is His power working mightily. Thus “it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). “It shall accomplish what I please” (Isa. 55:11). Let it.

This is the power of the word of God to the person who receives it as it is in truth. This is the power that “effectually works in you who believe.” This is the way that the word of God accomplishes that which He pleases, in those who will receive it and let it dwell in them.

Are you mourning under the leprosy of sin? Have you said, “Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean”? The answer is now to you, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And “immediately” you are cleansed as certainly as was that other leper (Matt. 8:2). Believe the word, and praise the Lord for its cleansing power.

Let all who have named the name of Christ receive His word today, depending upon that word to do what the word says. Accept it as did those of old, and immediately it effectually works in you the good pleasure of the Father.

“And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom. . . . For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1, 2).

We are liable to get an idea that we have a system of truth comprising such subjects as the law, the Sabbath, nature of man, advent, etc., and that to this we have superadded a little gospel, the idea of justification by faith. There is but one doctrine we have to preach, that is the gospel of Christ.

Is there nothing besides the gospel to teach? “It is the power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16). What do we want besides salvation? What more can we ask for?

The gospel brings righteousness. The righteousness of God is what God does, His way. To be in harmony with Him is to make His way our way. The gospel reveals this way to us (vs. 17). Not only this, but it is the power of God to work out His way in us. The Bible is a statement of God’s way, and is summed up in the ten commandments, which are a declaration of His righteousness (Isa. 51:6, 7).

In Matthew 6:33, Christ declares this righteousness to be the one thing needful. Why? Righteousness is life, and the one who has God’s righteousness has everything in this world and in the world to come.

“The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:17). Nothing else? By faith and works? “Do not add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). To be just is to be righteous, and a righteous man will do righteous acts. That is the fruit of righteousness. But how does He do these works? By faith. “This is the work of God, that you believe” (John 6:28, 29).

Nothing can be added to the preaching of the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ. What about these doctrines, as the Sabbath, immortality, etc.? Since the “kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt 6:33) is the one thing needful, and since there is nothing unimportant in the Bible, all of these doctrines are simply division lines summed up in the doctrine of righteousness by faith. We can preach nothing else, for everything outside of this is sin.

“But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; . . . that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:27, 29).

The most unreasonable thing in the universe is human reason. It is utter foolishness with God.

Paul says those who do the things described in Romans 1:23-32 know that they are worthy of death. The heathenism Paul was speaking of, as represented at Athens and elsewhere, was not ignorance of things of this world. It embraced people whose work in the arts and sciences is studied today. A person may know without God, just as the beast may know. But there is no wisdom apart from God. This is what Paul means when he says, “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy . . . according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Col. 2:8).

We hear a good deal of “natural morality” and “scientific morality”—morality common to all men. This is what Paul is describing—heathenism. The popular idea of heathenism is incorrect. The heathen doesn’t know God. He may be religious, but God is not the source of his wisdom.

In Mark 7:22, 23, Christ describes the source of “natural morality.” The hearts of all are alike; we are made of one blood to dwell upon the earth. The heathen are the people who do the things spoken of in Paul’s first chapter of Romans, wherever they live.

Compare 2 Timothy 3:1-7 with the latter part of Romans 1. They are almost identical. It means that men in the last days shall be open heathen—giving themselves up to the works of the flesh. It means that all who will be destroyed will be heathen. Who are the heathen? “You who judge practice the same things” (Rom. 2:1).

Did we ever do anything we would be ashamed to speak of? Wherein were we different from the heathen? Here is broad enough ground for the gospel. It is a shame to speak of those things that have been done by us all in secret, but “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. . . . For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’” (Romans 1:16, 17).

The first chapter of Romans can be summarized as the condition of man without God, and how he gets into that condition. The cause of this condition can be stated in one word—unbelief.

Coupled with unbelief is self-exaltation. They lost God “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (vs. 21). They attributed everything to themselves, and as self was advanced, faith in God decreased, till they were in the darkness of idolatry.

Plato, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, taught what they called moral science; Confucius taught moral precepts. But what they all lacked was to tell men how to do what they taught to be right. Even these men who taught moral science and virtue were themselves practicing the things they condemned, and coming far short of doing what they set forth as moral duty.

While those teachers tell us what to do but fail to give us power to do it, the religion of Jesus Christ not only makes known what is right but gives us the ability to perform that which is good. Thus when Christ is not woven into the teaching, the very effort to teach morals is simply the old pagan science of morals, which is immorality. Moral science aside from Jesus Christ is immorality; it is sin.

“Jesus Christ . . . is the ‘stone which you builders rejected, which has now become the head of the corner.’ In no one else can salvation be found. For in all the world no other name has been given to men but this, and it is by this name that we must be saved!” (Acts 4:11, 12, Phillips).

“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:21).

God is no respecter of persons. He will render to every man according to his deeds. In the judgment nothing is taken into account but a man’s works. “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Rev. 22:12).

The character of the works shows the amount of faith in Christ. A simple profession will not do. God does not respect our person or profession. We may call ourselves Christians and pretend to keep the law and pity the poor heathen, but God classes all together who fail to have good works.

“As many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law” (Rom. 2:12). This shows that the law is the standard by which every man in the world will be judged.

But what is it to keep the law? It is to keep all its precepts. Our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, which was only an outward form. If we hate, it is murder (Matt. 5:22). If we have impure thoughts, it is adultery (vs. 28). If we have an impure heart, we violate all the rest of the law. We may be ever so strict in outward Sabbath observance and adhere closely to the outward obligations of all the rest of the law, but an impure heart renders every act sinful.

“When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things contained in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves” (Rom. 2:14). God has by various agencies placed enough light in the heart of every man to lead him to know the true God. Even nature itself reveals the God of nature. And if a man in the darkest heathenism has a desire to know the true God, He will, if necessary, send a man around the world to give him the light of truth.

So every man that is finally lost will have rejected light which, if cherished, would have led him to God.

“Behold, you desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom” (Psalm 51:6).

Knowledge without God is foolishness, and as Paul states it, profits nothing. “What advantage then has the Jew? . . . Chiefly, because to them were committed the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:1, 2). Abraham was led out from heathenism, from faith to faith, and his descendants were beloved for their father’s sake. To them God committed His truth.

They failed to realize what being a Jew was, and rested confidently in their high profession with the thought that God must think more of them than any other people. God had given them the light that they might carry it to others. But filled with pride they did not do the work.

During the captivity He revealed to Daniel that He would yet wait 490 years longer for His people to carry the light to the world. The carrying of the gospel to the Gentiles was a work which God all along the centuries had been working with the Jews to get them to perform, but they refused. Yet God cared for the Gentiles, and “He did not leave Himself without witness” (Acts 14:17).

Do we not see a tendency among us to boast of the light we have and to feel that the Lord must have a special regard for us? But He has given us the light only that we may carry it to others. If we boast of the light but do not carry it to others, God will bear with us long, but finally someone else will take our place and do the work.

God has sworn to Abraham, and His promises will be fulfilled, even though men do not believe (Rom. 3:3, 4). If none are found with the faith of Abraham, God is able of the stones to raise up children unto Him. God is Himself on trial before the universe, and Satan and evil men have always charged Him with being unjust and arbitrary; but in the judgment all the universe will say, “Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints” (Rev. 15:3).

“By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight. . . . The righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, . . . even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe” (Romans 3:20-22).

Some people feel apprehensive lest laying stress on such texts as this should discredit the law. But God who wrote the text may be left to care for the honor of His own law. It is to the everlasting credit of the law that it cannot justify the transgressor.

The law requires in man the perfect righteousness manifested in the life of Christ. No man ever lived as Christ lived—all are guilty. The perfection and majesty of the law leads sinners to cry out, “What shall we do?”

Sometimes the idea comes that if Christ would only wipe out the record of the past, the individual might then get along very well. That was the trouble with the Jews (Rom. 10:2, 3). There is no one on earth who in himself can do one deed as pure and as free from selfishness as though Christ had done it. “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

There never was a better man than Paul, as a man. If anyone outside of Christ ever did a good deed, Paul did. Yet he had to count all things he had but “loss,” that he might gain Christ (Phil. 3:4-8). The psalmist says that God withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly. If Paul, before he found Christ, had had something in his nature that was good, he might have taken these things along with him. But he counted all as loss.

The plan of salvation is one of giving and taking—giving on the part of God and taking on the part of man. The pride of the heart resents this dependence upon God; but we are pensioners, beggars, miserable, and poor, and naked.

“You know how generous our Lord Jesus Christ has been: he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor. 8:9, NEB).

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10).

The prophet rejoiced in the Lord because God had clothed him with the garments of salvation and covered him with the robe of righteousness. We are not to put on the robe ourselves. Let us trust God to do that. When the Lord puts it on, it is not as an outward garment merely. He puts it right through a person so that he is all righteousness.

Sometimes we hear people talk as though we must ourselves put on a fairly respectable garment before we can ask for the white raiment. But it is the very need and helplessness of the beggar that recommends him to charity.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). All men stand on the same level and the offer of mercy is to whoever will come and partake of the water of life freely. We are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (vss. 23, 24).

There is but one thing in this world that one needs, and that is justification,—and justification is a fact, not a theory. It is the gospel. All things worthy to be preached must tend to justification by faith. We need the righteousness of Christ to justify the present just as much as to make perfect the imperfect deeds of the past.

“I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles” (Psalm 34:4-6).

“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘For YAH, the Lord, is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation’” (Isaiah 12:2).

We have been obliged by the Spirit of God to look at the workings of the carnal mind, and what it will do for man, and how it will deceive him in every way.

Did not Jesus say to us, “Therefore be zealous and repent”? (Rev. 3:19). What does that “therefore” mean?

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. . . . Therefore be zealous and repent” (vss. 15-19).

How much does that “therefore” cover? All of it. The first thing He says is, “I know your works,” and the last, “Therefore be zealous and repent.” Are you ready to repent of your works now?

How much good are these works going to do you? Are they perfect? Are they righteous? “Whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Have there been any works about you that have not been of faith, that have had self in them?

Do not forget that garment that we are to buy—that garment “woven in the loom of heaven, in which there is not a single thread of human devising.” If you and I have stuck in a single thread of devising in that life that we have professed to be living in Christ, we have spoiled the garment.

“In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. . . . This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me, saith the Lord” (Isa. 54:14, 17).

“He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

When you go to God, take these Scriptures on your lips, “We shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:10). “By one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (vs. 19). Take them to God in prayer. They are true, for the Lord Himself has said so.

How can these blessings be obtained? By faith! Take it by faith, and it is yours, and no one can take it from you. Then you will have it, although you do not understand how it can be done. When you have it, you have life. What life? The divine life.

Then when you come up to the time of temptation, the time when you have usually fallen, you can tell Satan that he has no power to make you fall beneath that temptation, for it is not you, but Christ who dwells in you.

There never was a time in the life of any person when of himself he had power to resist temptation. We cannot do it. That proves that we must have a life different from our natural life in order to resist sin at all. That must be a life that sin has never touched and can never touch. Repeat the glorious words over and over again, “His life is mine, I cannot be touched by sin. His strength is my strength; His obedience is my obedience, and His life is my life. That was a sinless life, and by faith I have it, I hold to it because it is mine, and sin cannot touch it.” That is the only way to resist temptations, and it will be successful every time.

“Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (vss. 20, 21).

“If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? . . . If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11:11-13).

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THE PRECIOUS JOY OF SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH-KEEPING

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure [business] on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure [business], nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord” (Isaiah 58:13, 14).

Creation was not a physical work; it was wholly spiritual. God spoke, and it was. And His word is spirit.

Therefore, to keep God’s Sabbath or rest is to enjoy spiritual rest. The Sabbath is not designed for mere physical rest, but for spiritual. It has a higher meaning than is commonly attached to it.

True, we are enjoined from doing our own labor on that day, but the cessation from physical labor on the Sabbath day is but an emblem of the spiritual rest which God gives to those who accept Him as the Creator of all things. Without spiritual rest there is no true Sabbath-keeping.

One may refrain from labor on the seventh day as scrupulously as ever the strictest Pharisee did; yet if he does not delight in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is not keeping the Sabbath.

“If I should keep the seventh day, how could I make a living?” The Sabbath itself points out the answer. The idea of Sabbath observance is that of perfect trust in God, whose love for His creatures is equal to His power to do them good.

“Should a man in an extremity labor on the Sabbath to harvest when that seems the only hope of securing the crop?” The God who alone can make the corn grow is fully able to protect it, or to make ample provision in another way if it should be destroyed. The Sabbath reminds us that God is “gracious and full of compassion” (Psalm 111:4).

“Thus says the Lord: ‘Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.’” (Jer. 17:21).

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