

The Everlasting God

***“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”
—Psalms 90:2***

THE GREAT SUPREME Creator of the universe, whom we worship, is known in the Holy Bible as Jehovah, or *Yahweh*, the self-existing one. He dwells “in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting.” (I Tim. 6:16) We see evidences of his glory in the heavens and in all the creative works on earth, from the tiniest microbe to the largest whale, elephant, or ancient dinosaur, to the smallest grain of sand,

and to the highest and most majestic mountain.

THE GLORY OF THE HEAVENS

David expresses this glory very well in the nineteenth Psalm. It reads, “The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the work of his hands the expanse is declaring; Day unto day doth pour forth speech, And night unto night doth breathe out knowledge. There is no speech and there are no words—Unheard is their voice! Yet through all the earth hath gone forth their voice,— And to the end of the world their sayings.”—Ps. 19:1-4, *Rotherham*

This majesty of Creation cannot be missed by the naked eye. We do not need powerful telescopes to view the timeless and exact pageantry of the heavens. Our time clocks are set by checking the precise and exact movement of the stars. All orbit in exact harmony to one another.

The common man knows this and accepts it without a second thought. Yet in recent time some of the great thinkers of our era have continued to probe the unknown vastness of space with an intent to describe how the god of ‘chance’ seems to work. Ever since a concept of evolution for life upon earth was put forth as a theory, the element (god) of chance has been adopted to replace a god of intelligence, morality, and supreme, unfathomable power. It is not surprising, therefore, to see an article

published in the June 26, 2001 “*Time*” magazine, entitled “*The End,*” or “*How the Universe will End.*” In advertising this article, the front cover claims, “Peering deep into space and time, scientists have just solved the biggest mystery in the cosmos.”

The article begins by saying, “For those who live in a city or near one, the night sky isn’t much to look at—just a few scattered stars in a smoggy, washed-out expanse. In rural Maine, though, or North Dakota, or the desert Southwest, the view is quite different. Even without a telescope, you can see thousands of stars twinkling in shades of blue, red and yellow-white, with the broad Milky Way cutting a ghostly swath from one horizon to the other. No wonder our ancient ancestors peered up into the heavens with awe and reverence; it’s easy to imagine gods and mythical heroes inhabiting such a luminous realm.”

BEYOND THE VISIBLE

“Yet for all the magnificence of the visible stars, astronomers know they are only the first shimmering veil in a cosmos vast beyond imagination. Armed with ever more powerful telescopes, these explorers of time and space have learned that the Milky Way is a huge, whirling pinwheel made of 100 billion or more stars; that tens of billions of other galaxies lie beyond its edges; and, most astonishing of all, that these galaxies are rushing headlong away from one another in the aftermath of an explosive cataclysm known as the Big Bang.

“That event—the literal birth of time and space some fifteen billion years ago—has been understood, at least in its broadest outlines, since the 1960’s. But, in more than a third of a century, the best minds in astronomy have failed to solve the mystery of what happens at the other end of time. Will the galaxies continue to fly apart forever, their glow fading until the cosmos is cold and dark? Or will the expansion slow to a halt, reverse direction and send the stars crashing back together in a final, apocalyptic Big Crunch? Despite decades of observations with the most powerful telescopes at their disposal, astronomers simply haven’t been able to decide.

“But, thanks to a series of remarkable discoveries—the most recent just two weeks ago—the question may now have been settled once and for all. Scientists who were betting on a Big Crunch liked to quote Robert Frost: ‘Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice. From what

I've tasted of desire, I hold with those who favor fire.' Those in the other camp preferred T.S. Eliot: 'This is the way the world ends. Not with a bang but a whimper.' The verdict seems to be in: T.S. Eliot wins.

"Why do we care? For one thing, this is a question that has haunted humans for as long as we have walked the earth. A definitive answer—if that is indeed what we have—will force philosophers and religious leaders to rethink their assumptions and beliefs about eternity and how the world will end. For scientists, meanwhile, there are certain details in these discoveries that have profound—and bizarre—implications. For example, the new observations bolster the theory of inflation: the notion that the universe when it was still smaller than an atom went through a period of turbo-charged expansion, flying apart (in apparent, but not actual, contradiction of Albert Einstein's theories of relativity) faster than the speed of light."

DARK ENERGY AND DARK MATTER

To the layman, all this language can be confusing and meaningless. To many scientists, the so-called proofs may be questionable. There is talk of 'dark energy' and 'dark matter,' all new concepts to the scientific world, and an older concept of 'antigravity' has been infused with some new life. As the article continues:

"An equally unsettling implication is that the universe is pervaded with a strange sort of 'antigravity,' a concept originally proposed by and later abandoned by Einstein as the greatest blunder of his life. This force, which has lately been dubbed 'dark energy,' isn't just keeping the expansion from slowing down, it's making the universe fly apart faster and faster all the time, like a rocket ship with the throttle wide open.

"It gets stranger still. Not only does dark energy swamp ordinary gravity but an invisible substance known to scientists as 'dark matter' also seems to outweigh the ordinary stuff of stars, planets and people by a factor of ten to one. 'Not only are we not at the center of the universe,' University of California, Santa Cruz, astrophysical theorist Joel Primack has commented, 'we aren't even made of the same stuff the universe is.'"

"These discoveries raise more questions than they answer. For example, just because scientists know dark matter is there doesn't mean they understand what it really is. Same goes for dark energy. 'If you thought the universe was hard to comprehend before,' says University of

Chicago astrophysicist Michael Turner, ‘then you’d better take some smart pills, because it’s only going to get worse.’”

To compound the ignorance on this speculation called a theory, the timing for the universe to burn out is estimated at ten thousand trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion, trillion (10^{100}) years. That time is so large a number, that for all practical purposes it approaches saying it will never happen.

THE BIG BANG THEORY

The article continued by describing how, in the 1960’s, the ‘big bang’ theory was postulated:

“Things seemed a lot simpler back in 1965, when two astronomers at Bell Labs in Holmdel, NJ, provided a resounding confirmation of the Big Bang theory, at the time merely one of several ideas floating around on how the cosmos began. The discovery happened purely by accident. Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson were trying to get an annoying hiss out of a communications antenna, and after ruling out every other explanation—including the residue of bird droppings—they decided the hiss was coming from outer space.”

The reasoning that went into the big bang theory of the universe’s beginning was that this radio hiss from the dawn of time was the cosmic microwave background radiation left over from the initial big bang beginning of the universe fifteen billion years ago. Based on this reasoning is a concept that initially the universe was nothing but space, and that a particle smaller than an atom grew with explosive power from nothing to the matter and energy as we know them today. All this came from investigating a radio hiss, for which a Nobel Prize was received.

IN THE BEGINNING

The Bible does not tell us how the universe came into existence, although it does tell us in general of the development of the heavens and earth, as seen from the standpoint of a hypothetical earthbound observer. Rather, it tells us of a supreme, intelligent Creator, who always existed and is infinite. There are beginnings mentioned in the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Another beginning is mentioned in the first chapter of John’s gospel, “In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a god was

the Word. This was in a beginning with the God. All through it was done; and without it was done not even one, that has been done.”—John 1:1-3, *Interlinear, Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

Thus we see that there is more than one beginning in the Bible. The one mentioned in John must have been the principal beginning work of the Heavenly Father when he created the Logos, his spokesman and his ‘right hand’—to use an expression denoting his principal assistant. As John informs us, the Logos was involved in every creative work of God. (see also I Cor. 8:6, Eph. 3:9) This includes all of the heavenly host, of which scientists know nothing by scientific investigation.

After his conversion, the Apostle Paul was given special revelations which transcended the knowledge of all the other apostles at the time of which he writes in the book of Galatians, “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.”—Gal. 1:11-17

This special revelation enabled him to write in a more definitive manner of the role Jesus had in his prehuman existence as the Logos, saying of him: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.” (Col. 1:15-18) This description of Jesus as the first direct creation of God is confirmed by the Apostle John in the revelations he received. He writes of the messages given to the Laodicean Church, “These things saith the

Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”—Rev. 3:14

THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE

The beginnings told us in the Bible were those of an intelligent creator creating other intelligent beings. We ask, ‘Where did intelligence come from?’ ‘Where did the scientists of our day receive their rudimentary knowledge and their advanced knowledge?’ Everyone receives knowledge from another. We have teachers and written records that are studied by novices who then, as they learn, impart their knowledge to others.

In our day, science has become respected and highly esteemed. What is science? Science was originally defined as an orderly classification of knowledge on a given subject. This definition was expanded to that knowledge obtained or tested by the scientific method, which required a hypothesis, testing of the hypothesis; making the necessary observations and comparing results with the hypothesis, revising the theory if necessary. In the early days of science, no one dared to question the teachings of Aristotle. Any difference between the experiment and the teachings of Aristotle had to be blamed on an error in the experiment. Therefore, the claims of the astrophysicists about the end of the universe cannot be science because no human will be around to observe it. As these talk about dark matter and energy comprising most of our universe, then most of the universe cannot be tested and therefore is also outside the realm of science. To quote one of the astrophysicist’s statements in the “*Times*” article, “We’re really living dangerously. We’ve got this absurd, wonderful picture of the universe, and now we’ve got to test it.” We must remember that science is not the opinion of scientists. Cosmological ideas which cannot be tested by the scientific method are not science, but merely metaphysics.

What does the Bible tell us about the transfer of knowledge in the heavenly realm? The Apostle Paul says of the Father, and of Christ, “In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 2:3) When Hannah was granted her desire to have a son, and a son was born to her, she called him Samuel, because she had asked him of the Lord. (I Sam. 1:20) She had promised to dedicate him to the Lord, and did so when he was weaned. In her beautiful prayer of thanksgiving to God she

said, “for the Lord (Jehovah) is a God of knowledge.” (I Sam. 2:3) Likewise, Job asked, “Shall any teach God knowledge?” (Job 21:22) Wisdom is the proper application of knowledge. Jesus, in his prehuman existence, is personified by wisdom. (Prov. 8:22-31) How appropriate that the first direct creation of God should be personified by wisdom.

GOD’S AWESOME POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

There has to be a fountain of knowledge and wisdom. It is logical that such a fountain comes from the Heavenly Father, the great supreme Creator of the universe. Isaiah tried to direct our attention to this fact when he asked the questions, “Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord(Jehovah), or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?” (Isa. 40:13,14) It is one thing to have knowledge, and another to know how to use it wisely and well, with judgment for the good of others.

The prophet also probes the mighty, and precise power of God, asking, “Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?” (Isa. 40:12) The picture given to us is that of a workman using measuring and weighing devices to make a precise landscape of earth’s surface. Also, the workman, by using a measuring stick, places all the stars and constellations in their proper positions in the skies. As we try to visualize the vast power that created the heavens and the earth, we realize how small and insignificant we are as people upon this earth. Isaiah says, “The nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance.” (Isa. 40:15) He continues, “All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.”—vs.

17

As we ponder this state of affairs, he asks, “Have ye not known? have ye not heard? hath it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreaded them out as a tent to dwell in.” (Isa. 40:21,22) As man in his futility has tried to give credit to

other gods, as the ancients did in making them of stone, gold, and silver, and those of today who believe in a god of chance, they miss the only logical and obvious answer—the existence of a supreme, intelligent Creator who alone could make possible all the works of heaven and earth which we observe around us. Yet this is exactly what is happening today in the putting forth of questionable theories based on limited evidence.

WILL THE UNIVERSE END?

Mankind has developed marvelous instruments to peer beyond the known, orderly skies we see every day. In so doing, he has observed partial disorder and curious phenomenon which makes him resort to acknowledging ‘chance’ as the god of creation. He has failed to comprehend the order, and complexity of the known. This has led him to view the universe as coming to an end. We, however, can learn from the One Being who alone can alter the outcome, and he has assured us that “The earth abideth for ever.” (Eccles. 1:4) Hence, the universe will also survive.

The God we worship is eternal. To Joshua it was said, “The eternal God is thy refuge.” (Deut. 33:27) Isaiah describes God as “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity.” (Isa. 57:15) The Apostle Paul describes him as “the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God.” (I Tim. 1:17) In the science of mathematics, there is a property of numbers known as infinity. It is when something is boundless—is subject to no limitation or external determination. Our God is infinite.

The Apostle Paul has put in words our feelings of awe in contemplating our God, when he said, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”—Rom. 11:33-35

Finding Supreme Happiness

Key Verse: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

—Matthew 5:16

Selected Scripture: Matthew 5:1-16

OUR LESSON FOR TODAY is taken from the sermon on the mount, and has been regarded as containing timeless rules for living a good Christian life.

This is the first of Jesus’ lessons after his baptism by John at the river Jordan. Gathering his disciples together Jesus begins by reciting the beatitudes.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (vs. 3) The ‘poor in spirit’ are those who see a need in themselves, and realize a dependency upon a higher power. These are not the

proud or high-minded. God deals with those who have a low, humble esteem of themselves. Only these will be fit for his kingdom.

Our Lord continues, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” (vs. 4) To mourn means to grieve. These view present conditions and see a need for change, and are looking for God’s kingdom. It is to these that God will “wipe away all tears from their eyes.”—Rev. 21:4

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” (vs. 5) Only those who are submissive to God’s will, not arrogant, not self-assertive, but forbear under injury or annoyance, will inherit the earth, and will reign with Jesus in the blessing of all the families of the earth.—Gen. 22:18

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (vs. 6) ‘Hunger’ and ‘thirst’ are strong terms, which resound with thoughts of passionate desire. To be righteous means that one will give diligence to strive after everything that is right and good. The thought behind the word ‘filled’ is to be satisfied with everything the Lord provides.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (vs. 7) What a wonderful trait is mercy. We are told that God’s mercy towards his Creation is as “high” as the “heaven.” (Ps. 103:11) We must learn to be merciful as God is merciful. If we forsake mercy to others, we can be sure that God will not be merciful to us.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” (vs. 8) The Apostle Paul tells Timothy and us, “The end of the commandment is charity [love] out of a pure heart.” (I Tim. 1:5) To have a pure heart is necessary for us. We must be cleansed in will and spirit, and as far as possible in our words and thoughts.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” (vs. 9) Peacemaking starts with the individual. It means that one will not stir up strife, cause trouble or dissention, because these are works of the flesh. The Apostle James says, “The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”—James 3:18

In ending the list of beatitudes, Jesus brings persecution to our minds. Followers of Christ will attract persecution, but that which is incurred because of righteousness will be rewarded. We are to expect persecution.—Matt. 10:16-25

Concluding the beatitudes, Jesus calls “salt” and “light” to our attention. (vss. 13,14) Salt purifies, heals. Light comes from God’s Word. Everything we say or do should bring God the glory, and be a source of happiness to the child of God.

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Fulfilling the Commandments

Key Verse: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.”

—Matthew 5:17

***Selected Scripture:
Matthew 5:17-48***

IN OUR LAST LESSON, our Lord outlined the various ways of being supremely blessed. Evidently some interpreted some of his remarks as doing away with the Law of Moses. The disciples may have remembered the words of Joshua where he said, “Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left.”—Josh. 23:6

In Jesus’ answer of our key text, he said his mission would be to ‘fulfill’ the Law. Not the least ‘jot or tittle’ of the Law would pass away without fulfillment. He then warned his disciples that if anyone was to break even one of the least commandments of the Law, and teach men so, would be called least in the kingdom, but those who kept and taught the Law would be called great.—vs. 19

Our Lord knew that only a perfect man could keep the Law inviolate, and that he was that man. Why then did he warn his disciples not to break any commandment of the Law lest they receive a penalty? It wasn’t, thereby, in the keeping, but in the teaching to violate God’s Law, that would bring a penalty.

Jesus warned against the self-righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. True righteousness comes from a humble recognition of one’s self, and a leaning upon God for guidance. Only those of such character can expect to enter into his kingdom.

In God’s commandments it was forbidden to kill. (Deut. 5:17) Jesus, however, warned everyone not to become angry with a brother without a cause, because it was equivalent to murder, and judgment would be meted out. (vs. 22) The laws given to the Jewish nation were so exacting that one could be brought before the Sanhedrin, (Jewish Court) and sentenced to death for certain violations. Jesus also gives the formula for

forgiveness. (vss. 23,24) Go first to the one who has erred against you and be reconciled to him, then go to God with your sacrifice of forgiveness.

Adultery was an infraction against the Law, punishable by death. (Lev. 20:10) However, the spirit of that law for those in Christ goes so far that even looking after a woman to lust is a violation of God's law. We are to eradicate all impurity lest it cause spiritual destruction. (vss. 27-30) Marriage is sacred. In the Law of Israel, man could give a bill of divorcement to his wife if the woman was found to be unclean. (Deut. 24:1) Our Lord said one should only divorce in case of fornication. (vss. 31,32) He explained the matter in more detail on another occasion. (Matt. 19:3-12) He gave rules for the making of vows. (vss. 33-37) One must not commit perjury, but to promise to the Lord only those things he can keep.—Deut. 23:21-23

The receiving of persecution without retaliation is enjoined upon Christians. One must walk the extra mile and not turn away even from those who borrow. To fulfill God's laws will mean love in the highest degree. The aim is to become the children of God. It is all this that will make one perfect even as the Father is perfect.—vs.48

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Worrying Needlessly

Key Verse: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”*

—*Matthew 6:33, 34*

Selected Scripture:
*Matthew 6:19-21,
25-34*

IN OUR KEY TEXT JESUS tells his listeners to seek for the highest of all goals, ‘the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.’ Our Lord knew that the earthly-minded have different aims and ambitions and that worry takes a great toll upon their hearts. He counsels, ‘Take therefore no thought for the morrow.’ This passage is better translated, “Be not anxious, ... about the morrow.”—Matt. 6:34, *Wilson’s Emphatic Diaglott*

There are proper concerns in this life, but our Lord counsels not to let these overwhelm the mind. Sufficient is the day, with its evil. Tomorrow will have its problems; however, these will pass.

The earthly-minded worry about how much of the treasures of this earth they can accumulate, not realizing the frailty of such trifles; which our Lord said could be stolen or moth-eaten. (vs. 19) He said, “Take heed, and beware of

covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” (Luke 12:15) The proper treasures we are to seek, are found in heaven, of which the greatest is the blessed fellowship with God and our loving Savior Jesus Christ.—I John 1:3

There is a need for explanation of verse 25. Will God supply us everything without our exerting an effort to obtain it? The answer is no. We read in Ephesians 4:28, “Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good.” Jesus did not intend us to be passive and expect the Father to supply our needs. The Apostle Paul labored as a tentmaker, not leaning on others for his welfare. —Acts 18:3

In Matthew 6:31, the Greek word *merimnao*, translated ‘thought’ means ‘anxious concern.’ Those who have committed all into the hands of the Father need not have any anxious concern. Even the birds receive their food without anxious concern. All must realize that anyone’s efforts will not add to his stature even “one cubit.”—vs. 27

Jesus calls attention to “the lilies of the field.” (vss. 28,29) Through no efforts of their own, these small flowers of the earth survive, and are beautiful. Solomon with all his wealth and fame was not arrayed (clothed) like the lily. We find in these verses, dealing with the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field, the lesson of faith. Worry destroys faith. We remember how our Lord fed five thousand with only five loaves and two fishes. He rebuked the disciples for lack of faith.—Matt. 14:15-20; 17:19,20

The Lord says he can clothe the grass of the field, which is here today and gone tomorrow. We are much more precious than grass. Take no anxious thought, saying, “What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?” Let others of a worldly mind seek after these things, for the Father knows what things we have need of. (Matt. 6:30-32) The Christian is not to worry needlessly, but to seek “first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”—vs. 33

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Relating to Others

Key Verse: *“All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.”*
—Matthew 7:12

Selected Scripture:
Matthew 7:1-5, 12-20

IN OUR LESSON FOR TODAY, Jesus continues his sermon on the mount, and says, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” (Matt. 7:1) Continuing he says that with what judgment we mete out, we will receive the same. (vs. 2) Verses 1 to 5 lead to a lesson on faultfinding. Mercy and forgiveness are key elements in Christian character building, and should be sought instead.

All are of the fallen race of Adam. (Rom. 3:10, Ps. 51:5) Therefore, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, and resentment oftentimes enter into our lives. Our Lord tells us what to do, and what not to do, in these cases. To judge, or sentence, someone unjustly is forbidden in the law of God, for only our Heavenly Father can read the heart. “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” (I Sam. 16:7) The great lesson of forgiveness goes far beyond mere lip service. True forgiveness comes from the heart.—Matt. 18:35

Jesus said, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12) Do we really forgive those who wrong us? Our Father in heaven is looking at the true condition of our heart. God has given us a standard, the law of love. We must treat others, as we would like them to treat us, which is the golden rule. Some can see the “mote” (the smallest speck) in their neighbor’s eye, without recognizing the “beam” (log) in their own. (vss. 3-5) Our own faults are usually far greater than those of others. The lessons of judgment and forgiveness must be exercised properly. We should always exercise forgiveness and never judge.

There are two great commandments given by God, which embody the rules of love. “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” (Matt. 22:37-39) If we follow these commandments we will forgive those who

trespass against us, and we will not judge. If we should judge, we should not condemn.—Luke 6:37

Two roads of travel are shown in Matthew 7:13,14. The first is a wide road, a way that leads downward to destruction. All mankind because of sin are on this road, needing the kingdom of Christ to reverse their direction. The second is a narrow road, steep, difficult, and hard to traverse. This road leads upward to life. Only a few are encouraged to travel this road. (Matt. 22:14) This way, though difficult, will have the greatest of rewards, the Divine nature.—II Pet. 1:2-11

There are problems in being a Christian. False leaders that look like sheep, but are really wolves, are ready to devour the true sheep of the Lord's pasture. (vss. 15-17) What a warning. Satan has put roadblocks in the way of the Christian. There is a way of recognizing those who are wolves—they are known by their fruit. They are like thorns that wound, thistles with stinging nettles, briars that scratch and cause injury. We are to grow and develop like a good tree which gives good fruit. The tree that puts forth bad fruit will be hewn down and destroyed. We are to be diligent in recognizing the good from the bad.

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“Let Brotherly Love Continue”

A CASUAL READING of this final chapter of the Book of Hebrews might give one the impression that its subject matter is made up of various unrelated admonitions and warnings, with some doctrinal truths interspersed. However, the first sixteen verses are closely related in thought, presenting the manner in which one of the typical services of the Tabernacle represents practical Christian living—how we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, and our reasonable service.—Rom. 12:1

CHAPTER 13

VERSE 1 “Let brotherly love continue.”

The Apostle Paul’s masterful treatise on Christian love contained in I Corinthians 13 shows that without love all Christian endeavor would be in vain. In view of the subject matter presented in the next fifteen verses, we might properly consider this opening verse as Paul’s ‘text’ for the chapter.

VERSE 2 “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Hospitality is one of the evidences of brotherly love. Those who are in a position to share their homes and food with others when an opportunity and need arises, but do not do so, would manifest a lack of this particular grace of love. Abraham is the one referred to as having entertained ‘angels unawares.’ This was the occasion when three angels, appearing as men, called on Abraham and made the final announcement that his wife Sarah was to bear a son. It was on this occasion also that Abraham was informed concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.—Gen. 18

VERSE 3 “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”

In this verse Paul reminds us how love is manifested by our interest in those who are ‘in bonds’ and those who ‘suffer adversity.’ In the days of

the Early Church it was not an uncommon thing for the brethren to be imprisoned, to be in bonds. Paul is urging a close attachment to these. Remember them, he says, with the same degree of concern as though you too were bound.

We are also to remember those in ‘adversity.’ We are all members of one ‘body,’ the ‘body of Christ.’ In a physical body, when one part suffers they all suffer, and so it should be in the body of Christ. So it always is when ‘brotherly love’ continues.

VERSE 4 “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

At first glance this verse may seem out of place in the subject matter being presented. However, due to the prevailing conditions of his day, it might well be a reminder by Paul that the love which he was discussing was not the sort that finds expression in sensuality.

VERSE 5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

When brotherly love fills the heart there is no room for covetousness. In the Greek text the word translated ‘conversation’ includes one’s whole manner of life, not merely his words. If we are ‘content with such things’ as we have, our manner of life will not be motivated by selfish desires to acquire that which may belong to another. Christians are the ‘richest’ of any people in the world, for regardless of how much or how little of this world’s goods we may possess, we have God’s promise, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ With God as our caretaker, what more do we need?

VERSE 6 “That we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Fear is one of the contributing causes of covetousness—fear lest we may not have resources to meet needs which may arise, and fear that we may not be properly prepared to meet the competition of life. Love casts out fear, and besides, since the Lord is our helper, and has promised never to leave nor forsake us, we will not need to fear. Our enemies may be permitted by God to injure us temporarily, but he is able to overrule all such experiences for our eternal good, and to his glory.

VERSES 7,8 “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

I Timothy 5:17 states, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour.” The Greek word translated ‘rule’ in this letter to Timothy means to ‘stand before,’ that is, to take the lead, through teaching and example. The Greek word for rule in the text in Hebrews seems somewhat stronger. The marginal translation uses the word “guides.” The Lord has appointed the members in the body of Christ as it pleaseth him, and brotherly love will manifest itself by a humble recognition of the Lord’s arrangements, and a desire to cooperate therewith.

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VERSE 10 “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.”

An altar was always intended for sacrifice, not as a table from which to eat. The priests were permitted to eat, and were supposed to eat, certain portions of some of the sacrifices they offered, but apparently they did not eat from the altar in the sense of using it as a feasting board, or table. There are other pictures in the Bible which suggest that we feed upon Jesus—‘eat his flesh’ and ‘drink his blood.’ (John 6:53,54) This is a beautiful and meaningful illustration, but seemingly Paul does not have this in mind in this reference to the ‘altar.’ He is not saying that we have the privilege of eating from an altar of which the typical servants of God were not permitted to eat. What he does mean is that it is an altar of sacrifice.

VERSES 11-13 “For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

It is always important to note the words ‘for’ and ‘therefore’ in our study of the Bible. It is especially so in this case. First, Paul identifies the ‘altar’ and service of the Tabernacle which foreshadowed our privilege of sacrifice, emphasizing that it was the one in which the typical priests were forbidden to eat. For, instead of eating them, as was done in connection with some sacrifices, ‘the bodies of those beasts ... are burned without the camp [Lev. 16:27] ... Let us go ... unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.’

Just as they ‘which served the tabernacle’ were not permitted to eat the sin-offering animals, so our part in this arrangement is not to receive restitution blessings, but to become cosacrificers with Jesus, sharing with him in the great sin offering feature of the Divine plan. Instead of remaining by the altar to eat, we are to go . . . unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach—that is, to be ‘burned’ with him.

The typical service to which Paul is referring in this lesson was the one performed annually on Israel’s Day of Atonement—the tenth day of the seventh month. In that service there were two animals sacrificed as sin offerings—a bullock and a goat. The bullock was first slain. Its fat was burned on the brazen altar in the court of the Tabernacle; its blood was taken into the Most Holy of the Tabernacle and sprinkled on the mercy seat; and its carcass was taken outside the camp and burned. The goat for the sin offering was treated in the same manner.

Since the Apostle Paul clearly shows that we, as followers of Jesus, have the privilege of sharing his reproach, suffering with him ‘without the camp,’ and since he also explains that the altar on which we offer our sacrifice is typed by the one from which the priests had no right to eat, it seems clear that the two animals used in the typical Day of Atonement service represented the sacrificial work of Christ and the church. The bullock, being sacrificed first, would represent Jesus’ perfect sacrifice; while the goat, would represent the church. The fact that both animals were handled in the same manner would illustrate our being “planted together in the likeness of his death.” (Rom. 6:5) This viewpoint gives vital meaning to Paul’s invitation, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, . . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1) Our ‘bodies’ would not be acceptable for sacrifice except through the merit of the blood of Christ.

VERSE 14 “For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.”

Again the little word ‘for’ continues the sequence of thought. If we should accept the benefits of Christ’s sacrificial work merely for ourselves, it would mean that ours would be a hope of restoration to life on the earth—restitution. In that case we would have here on earth a continuing ‘city,’ or a permanent home. Instead of this we give our bodies to be burned, as Jesus did. This, in addition to symbolizing the reproaches

of Christ in which we share, suggests also the giving up of our human life. While we know that going to Jesus ‘without the camp’ means that the earth cannot be our permanent home, we seek a city to come. Jesus promised to prepare a place where his disciples might be together with him. Thus, ‘if we die with him, we shall live with him’—at the right hand of the throne of God.

VERSE 15 “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

In the typical Atonement Day service, before the priest sprinkled the blood of the bullock upon the mercy seat, he took a censer full of live coals from the fire which was burning on the brazen altar in the court—where the fat of both the bullock and the goat was burned. Then, “his hands full of sweet incense beaten small” he went into the first Holy of the Tabernacle, sprinkled the incense upon the coals of fire, thus causing a rich perfume to fill the Tabernacle, penetrating into the Most Holy. The coals of fire were placed on the golden altar, which was in the Holy.—Lev. 16:12,13

Since Paul shows so clearly our privilege of participating in the antitypical Atonement Day sacrifices insofar as the burning outside the camp is concerned, it seems reasonable that when he speaks of offering the ‘sacrifice of praise,’ he is drawing a lesson from this incense feature of the Atonement Day service. This represented God’s viewpoint of the sacrifice. It was sweet perfume to him. So in the antitype, while our bodies are being burned without the camp, where by the world we are considered to be the “filth” and “offscouring” of the earth, our hearts are going out to God in praise for all that he has done for us, and for our privilege of being workers together with him.—I Cor. 4:13

It is more than merely a thankful feeling in our hearts. This sacrifice of praise, Paul says, is ‘the fruit of our lips.’ Lips are a symbol of speech, or utterance. It is a beautiful way of illustrating our ambassadorship, that we are ‘witnesses of Jesus,’ the ‘light of the world,’ commissioned to preach the Gospel to all nations. Peter puts it plainly, saying that we “should show forth the praises” of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. (I Pet. 2:9) This is the fruit of our lips, our sacrifice of praise, and we may be sure that it is sweet incense to God.

VERSE 16 “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

This is a practical summary of the thoughts Paul associates with the admonition in the first verse—“Let brotherly love continue.” This means having a solicitous interest in the ‘body’ members, going to Jesus without the camp, and offering the sacrifices of praise. Therefore, we should ‘do good,’ and forget not to ‘communicate,’ that is, to give—our time, talent, strength, money, our all—that others might be blessed. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” (Gal. 6:10) ‘With such sacrifices God is well pleased,’ says Paul. We may think of animals being burned, or of incense burning on a golden altar, and it is wonderful to understand these symbols and types. Such knowledge alone is valueless unless it is translated into practice by doing good and communicating, through the use of our all in Divine service. This is the exercise of brotherly love. May we all let brotherly love continue!

VERSE 17 “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”

The ones who have the ‘rule’ over us are the elected elders of the ecclesias. But this rule is not to be in the nature of lording it over God’s heritage. The Greek text gives the better thought of their being ‘guides,’ or ‘leaders.’ We are to follow the leadership of our elders in so far as they follow Christ. Even the Apostle Paul did not ask more than this.

Spiritual guides, or leaders, are worthy of this position in the church only if they meet the qualifications mentioned in this admonition; that is, if they sincerely ‘watch’ for the ‘souls’ of the brethren. A true elder will have the interests of the brethren at heart, and will watch over them to prevent false teachers from preying upon them. He will be humble in his service, and willing to sacrifice his own comforts and conveniences in order that the best interests of his brethren may be served. Should we fail to follow the leadership of such, we would be sure to lose many rich blessings which the Lord has provided for us.

VERSES 18,19 “Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.”

In Acts 23:1 Paul speaks of having lived in “good conscience.” The particular blessing which he sought through the prayers of the brethren was that he might be restored to them. This might indicate that Paul was imprisoned at the time he wrote the epistle.

VERSES 20,21 “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

What a wonderful benediction with which to close a letter! It would not be possible to commend the Lord’s people to a better source of care and blessing than ‘the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.’ Paul desired that the Lord would make the Hebrew brethren ‘perfect in every good work.’ The Greek word here translated ‘perfect’ is defined by “*Strong’s Bible Concordance*” as “to complete thoroughly, that is repair (literally or figuratively) or adjust.” It is used by Paul in Galatians 6:1, and translated ‘restore.’ The text reads, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” It is also used in Matthew 4:21 and Mark 1:19 to describe the repairing or ‘mending of nets.’

The spiritual lives of the Hebrew brethren needed ‘repairing’ in order to be complete. They had started out well, but failing to give proper heed to the things they had heard, they had let them slip; so much so that they needed to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God. Paul had urged them to call to remembrance the ‘former days’ when they were first enlightened, and when they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. He reminded them that while they had suffered for the Truth they had not yet ‘resisted unto blood.’ Nevertheless, Paul realized that even after he had done his best to revive the faith and zeal of these brethren, his effort would be ineffective unless the Lord blessed it; so this was his wish for them, his benediction, that the Lord would restore them to every good work.

VERSE 22 “I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”

Much of the information of the Book of Hebrews on Old Testament types, and on the covenants of God, was written as an ‘exhortation’ in an effort to stimulate greater faithfulness to the Lord and the Truth on the part of the Hebrew brethren. Paul was concerned lest they fail properly to ‘suffer the word of exhortation,’ that is, that they might not appreciate his motive, hence fail to profit as they should from the things which he had written. He hoped that he had not overdone the matter, and reminds them that after all his letter contained only a ‘few words.’ Surely there was much more he could have written.

VERSE 23 “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.”

This reference to Timothy, indicating that he was a fellow worker with the writer helps to confirm Paul’s authorship of the epistle.

VERSE 24 “Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.”

There was a wonderful bond of Christian fellowship and unity among the brethren in apostolic days. It meant much for the brethren in Judea to receive a message of greeting from those in Europe. This same common interest and love is experienced among the true followers of the Lord even today.

VERSE 25 “Grace be with you all. Amen.”

After all is said and done, if we have the grace, or favor, of the Lord in our lives, nothing else can really matter; for “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) God’s grace takes care of every situation; cheers us in every trial, and keeps us humble in every joy. It covers our imperfections, and gives us strength to overcome. And when we reach the end of the way and hear that welcome, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant,’ we will know that it was only because God’s grace sustained us all the way that we were able to finish our course victoriously, and to the glory of God.

“Let Brotherly Love Continue”

A CASUAL READING of this final chapter of the Book of Hebrews might give one the impression that its subject matter is made up of various unrelated admonitions and warnings, with some doctrinal truths interspersed. However, the first sixteen verses are closely related in thought, presenting the manner in which one of the typical services of the Tabernacle represents practical Christian living—how we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, and our reasonable service.—Rom. 12:1

CHAPTER 13

VERSE 1 “Let brotherly love continue.”

The Apostle Paul’s masterful treatise on Christian love contained in I Corinthians 13 shows that without love all Christian endeavor would be in vain. In view of the subject matter presented in the next fifteen verses, we might properly consider this opening verse as Paul’s ‘text’ for the chapter.

VERSE 2 “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”

Hospitality is one of the evidences of brotherly love. Those who are in a position to share their homes and food with others when an opportunity and need arises, but do not do so, would manifest a lack of this particular grace of love. Abraham is the one referred to as having entertained ‘angels unawares.’ This was the occasion when three angels, appearing as men, called on Abraham and made the final announcement that his wife Sarah was to bear a son. It was on this occasion also that Abraham was informed concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.—Gen. 18

VERSE 3 “Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”

In this verse Paul reminds us how love is manifested by our interest in those who are ‘in bonds’ and those who ‘suffer adversity.’ In the days of

the Early Church it was not an uncommon thing for the brethren to be imprisoned, to be in bonds. Paul is urging a close attachment to these. Remember them, he says, with the same degree of concern as though you too were bound.

We are also to remember those in ‘adversity.’ We are all members of one ‘body,’ the ‘body of Christ.’ In a physical body, when one part suffers they all suffer, and so it should be in the body of Christ. So it always is when ‘brotherly love’ continues.

VERSE 4 “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

At first glance this verse may seem out of place in the subject matter being presented. However, due to the prevailing conditions of his day, it might well be a reminder by Paul that the love which he was discussing was not the sort that finds expression in sensuality.

VERSE 5 “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

When brotherly love fills the heart there is no room for covetousness. In the Greek text the word translated ‘conversation’ includes one’s whole manner of life, not merely his words. If we are ‘content with such things’ as we have, our manner of life will not be motivated by selfish desires to acquire that which may belong to another. Christians are the ‘richest’ of any people in the world, for regardless of how much or how little of this world’s goods we may possess, we have God’s promise, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.’ With God as our caretaker, what more do we need?

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Fear is one of the contributing causes of covetousness—fear lest we may not have resources to meet needs which may arise, and fear that we may not be properly prepared to meet the competition of life. Love casts out fear, and besides, since the Lord is our helper, and has promised never to leave nor forsake us, we will not need to fear. Our enemies may be permitted by God to injure us temporarily, but he is able to overrule all such experiences for our eternal good, and to his glory.

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VERSES 20,21 “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

What a wonderful benediction with which to close a letter! It would not be possible to commend the Lord’s people to a better source of care and blessing than ‘the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus.’ Paul desired that the Lord would make the Hebrew brethren ‘perfect in every good work.’ The Greek word here translated ‘perfect’ is defined by “*Strong’s Bible Concordance*” as “to complete thoroughly, that is repair (literally or figuratively) or adjust.” It is used by Paul in Galatians 6:1, and translated ‘restore.’ The text reads, “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness.” It is also used in Matthew 4:21 and Mark 1:19 to describe the repairing or ‘mending of nets.’

The spiritual lives of the Hebrew brethren needed ‘repairing’ in order to be complete. They had started out well, but failing to give proper heed to the things they had heard, they had let them slip; so much so that they needed to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God. Paul had urged them to call to remembrance the ‘former days’ when they were first enlightened, and when they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. He reminded them that while they had suffered for the Truth they had not yet ‘resisted unto blood.’ Nevertheless, Paul realized that even after he had done his best to revive the faith and zeal of these brethren, his effort would be ineffective unless the Lord blessed it; so this was his wish for them, his benediction, that the Lord would restore them to every good work.

VERSE 22 “I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.”

Much of the information of the Book of Hebrews on Old Testament types, and on the covenants of God, was written as an ‘exhortation’ in an effort to stimulate greater faithfulness to the Lord and the Truth on the part of the Hebrew brethren. Paul was concerned lest they fail properly to ‘suffer the word of exhortation,’ that is, that they might not appreciate his motive, hence fail to profit as they should from the things which he had written. He hoped that he had not overdone the matter, and reminds them that after all his letter contained only a ‘few words.’ Surely there was much more he could have written.

VERSE 23 “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.”

This reference to Timothy, indicating that he was a fellow worker with the writer helps to confirm Paul’s authorship of the epistle.

VERSE 24 “Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.”

There was a wonderful bond of Christian fellowship and unity among the brethren in apostolic days. It meant much for the brethren in Judea to receive a message of greeting from those in Europe. This same common interest and love is experienced among the true followers of the Lord even today.

VERSE 25 “Grace be with you all. Amen.”

After all is said and done, if we have the grace, or favor, of the Lord in our lives, nothing else can really matter; for “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) God’s grace takes care of every situation; cheers us in every trial, and keeps us humble in every joy. It covers our imperfections, and gives us strength to overcome. And when we reach the end of the way and hear that welcome, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant,’ we will know that it was only because God’s grace sustained us all the way that we were able to finish our course victoriously, and to the glory of God.

The Cleansing Power of Christ

A POOR LEPER came to Jesus, having on his lips the words of faith, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean;” to which the gracious reply was given, “I will; be thou clean.” (Matt. 8:2,3) The Bible uses leprosy as a type of sin. As a result of “one man’s disobedience” all mankind are moral lepers, born “in sin,” born with the seeds of sin in them, and misshapen by the multitude of iniquities which, through the laws of heredity, are passed on from one generation to another.—Rom. 5:12,19; Ps. 51:5

Nearly two thousand years ago, Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) By his suffering and death he provided a great sin offering sufficient to cover the sins of the whole world. Before the taking away of the world’s sin, which will be the work of the Millennial Age, he made a special application of his merit for the benefit of the church, called out from the world during the Gospel Age.

He appeared “in the presence of God for us.” (Heb.9:24) This cleansing from sin and imperfection our Heavenly Father has arranged to be effected by two agencies as suggested by two familiar scriptures, “The blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from all sin;” (I John 1:7) and “Let us draw near ... having ... our bodies washed with pure water.”—Heb. 10:22

HOW CLEANSED

As a result of the drawing of the Father, we came to Jesus in faith and consecration, recognizing that he alone is the one who can cleanse us from the ‘leprosy’ of sin. His merit imputed to us by faith brings the blessing of justification—“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. 5:1

This, in the Scriptures, is pictured by a white robe of righteousness covering all our imperfections. Following consecration and justification “through faith in his blood,” (Rom. 3:25) the Father begets us by his Spirit. This blessing of justification gives us “access by faith into this grace wherein we stand” as children of God, partakers of the heavenly calling. (Rom. 5:2) As a consequence, our unwilling daily shortcomings

are also covered by the merit of the same great sacrifice for sin, ‘the blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from all sin.’

A ‘spot’ upon this robe of righteousness given for our covering must be cleansed (forgiven) through repentance, and prayer, that his merit might be so applied. Mere repentance, and efforts to do better, after mistakes have been made, will remove none of these spots; but “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins.” (I John 2:1,2) The merit of our Savior’s sacrifice for such sins, causes them to be cleansed completely away.—Eph. 5:27

In addition to this gracious arrangement for freeing us from guilt, there is another kind of cleansing, equally necessary, suggested by the apostle’s words, ‘our bodies washed with pure water.’ “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” (II Cor. 7:1) “Christ also loved the church,” having cleansed it “with the washing of water by the word.”—Eph. 5:25,26

Those in Christ are still in the flesh and have numerous blemishes of mind and body, but with the aid of the Truth we are able to cast out wrong thoughts, break bad habits, and rid ourselves of unwise deportment of all kinds. After many years in the school of Christ, many actual blemishes are washed away by the pure water of Truth (symbolized by the laver in the court of the Tabernacle).

All the Lord’s spirit-begotten children use the Word (laver) in this way. The holy influence of the Word and Spirit helps us to progress to diminishing of defilement and imperfection. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”—Ps. 119:9

Thus would the Lord cleanse and perfect his people in righteousness and true holiness. This will produce a fixed character which will never again deviate from rectitude and love, and which can be safely clothed upon with immortality.

The white linen robe of righteousness now worn by the saints can be spotted and cleansed again. The holiness to be possessed by the overcomers in glory will never again experience defilement.

Dawn Bible Students Association

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