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Patient Endurance

“Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might inherit the promise.” Heb. 10:36

The Apostle is addressing the Christian church—You who have left the world, have accepted Christ as your Standard bearer, as well as your Redeemer, and who are seeking to walk in his steps, and you have made consecration of your life to the Lord—“Ye have need of patience.” To a certain extent you did the will of God when you made your consecration to be dead with Christ. But that will of God was more deeply impressed upon you when you began to realize more than at first what this sacrifice would mean, and that only those who suffer with Christ shall reign with him.

“After you were illuminated” you saw the matter clearly, and “endured a great fight of afflictions.” This was well. But Paul goes on to show in the context that some, after having demonstrated their zeal for a certain time, become cold. They become weary in well doing. And he tells us that these thus cut themselves off from the favours, privileges and blessings belonging to the church of Christ. His exhortation is that those who are still loyal to God at heart continue so and exercise patience, remembering that this is one of the cardinal graces of Christian character. Many have naturally a little love, a little gentleness, a little patience, a little meekness. etc. But after we begin to grow in the graces of the Holy Spirit, we need patience to control the flesh, the spirit of the world, the spirit of selfishness.

The will of God is in one sense of the word the standard of God—full perfection—that we should be like our Father which is in heaven. But God remembers that we are fallen creatures, and that we cannot do perfectly. Our text does not mean that we must do the will of God in the perfect and complete sense; but rather, as the Apostle elsewhere says, ours is a reasonable service. When we present our bodies living sacrifices to God, it is our reasonable service. God does not expect us to do that which is impossible.

THE PURPOSE

What is this will of God? Stated in concrete form, “This is the will of God (concerning you), even your sanctification.” (1 Thess. 4:3) As the Apostle teaches, consecration is a full and complete setting apart. If we do such a setting of ourselves apart at the beginning, then the Father sanctifies us—begets us as new creatures, and sets us apart. So we have, first of all, our setting of ourselves apart; and then God’s acceptance by our begetting of the Holy Spirit as new creatures, and his continued work in us.

We are doing the will of God when we fully consecrate ourselves to him, and attain a place in the new creation. But he wills to put us to the test. How much do we love God? How sincere are we? A soldier in an army might be loyal in time of quiet, but how would he be in time of stress? Would he desert the flag then, or would he prove himself a good soldier? He would need a great deal of patience. If he says he loves his country, his endurance and faithfulness will be tested in her time of need. He must go on picket duty; he must sometimes do menial work. He must endure wearisome marches, and many privations. All these things are required of a faithful soldier. If he is faithful, he is likely to be promoted, honored, for his faithful service.

So we are tested as to our loyalty. What are we willing to endure for Christ’s sake? How fully are we submitted? How deep does our submission go? Are we wholly in harmony with the will of the Lord? Is our interest merely superficial, or does it enter fully into our hearts? The question is not merely, Shall we make the consecration?—but after the Christian has taken all of these preliminary steps, to what extent will he manifest patient endurance and obedience and loyalty?

God puts us to these tests because he has great honors to bestow on those who will be overcomers. They are to be a select company, and these will receive the promise. As the Apostle says, it is after we have proved our loyalty to the very last, that we shall receive the promise; i.e. its fulfilment.

THE PROMISE

When, where, what is the promise? Undoubtedly the promise will be received in the resurrection. The promise includes all that God has in reservation for them that love him—that love him more than they love houses and lands, or children, or parents, or friends, or husbands or wives, or self, or any other thing.

The particular promise that the Apostle refers to here is The Promise. All our hopes and blessings are centred in the original promise made to Abraham, when God brought him out of the land of Chaldea into the land of Canaan. God promised Abraham that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed. That has been the great promise for encouragement to the seed, to give them patience and fortitude. This is the essence of the promise—that those who receive the promise shall be the seed of Abraham to bless the world. The faithful in Christ will be associated with him in his kingdom—will have the honor of blessing all the families of the earth under this kingdom. Every creature of God shall then be brought to a knowledge of his truth, and shall have the opportunity of being restored, if he will, to perfection, to all that was redeemed on Calvary.

Now, the opportunity is different. Now the selection is being made of those who will inherit the promise as the seed of Abraham. “If ye be Christ’s then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” The Apostle is in our text urging that we continue to be Christ’s and to abide in him. All those who thus remain in him to the end will be glorified with him. In order to remain faithful, we must have his spirit of devotion.

NOTABLE EXAMPLES

James exhorts the church saying, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.” Those whom the Apostle addressed already knew of the sufferings of Jesus. They already know of the faithfulness of the apostles. And now he was calling the attention of their minds to something additional. He is urging, Look back into the past, and see that patient endurance has been characteristic of all who have lived holy lives. These examples should be lessons of encouragement to us, in addition to those we have in the living brethren around us!

Then there is always something to be gained in casting the mind backward. The things close at hand are too near to be seen in their proper light. It was fitting that the Apostle should call attention to those faithful ones of the past, so that we might be encouraged to note what God desires. In those who are his, he desires a willingness to endure patiently and loyally, thus manifesting true character, that which greatly pleases him.

As we look back over the Old Testament record of the Prophets, we notice that many of them displayed this very quality referred to by the Apostle as loyalty to the Lord, a willingness to suffer afflictions for his sake, and not as experiences brought through chance upon them by the people. We see Moses—how willing he was to suffer affliction because of his faith in the promise made to Abraham and his conviction that the promise would come true. He preferred to suffer with the people of God rather than to live at ease in the royal family of Pharaoh, into which he had been adopted.

We see in Job another example of patient endurance of tribulation and of strong opposition for a considerable time. We see the same in Jeremiah—how much his faithfulness cost him of hardship, and how patient he was. We see the same in Daniel the Prophet—his faithfulness to the Lord, his patient endurance of whatever God permitted to come against him. And so with others of the prophets. And we read their experiences were written for our admonition, our instruction. Although they belong to one dispensation and we to another, yet their experiences furnish us good lessons.—1 Cor.10:6, 11.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Applying these lessons to ourselves, we may say that to whatever extent we may be privileged to speak the Word of God and to suffer persecution therefore, if we take it with patience, it will bring us a corresponding blessing and commendation from the Lord, But we cannot think it would be pleasing to him if, when we suffer, we think, Oh, how terrible, terrible, terrible! Such an attitude would not be taking his Word for it, that “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” and that all things shall work out for our good.—2 Tim. 3:12; Rom. 8:28.

When Job was rich, prosperous, God tested him by taking from him all his family, all his wealth, his health, and even allowing his wife to turn against him. Yet in all this Job did not turn against God. He did indeed express wonder, but he looked to the Lord in faith and said, “Through worms shall destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.” I shall yet receive the manifestation of his favour, and learn what he means by these experiences, these afflictions, coming upon me. “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”—Job 13:15.

After his testings had been accomplished, God gave him back children, houses, lands, friends. And these coming in abundance shadowed forth the blessings of restitution—how the tribulations of mankind will eventually work out for good to those who will love God. If those who are now suffering affliction because of their loyalty to the Lord, because of their trust in his arrangements, will take afflictions and trials joyfully, these will surely work out good to them—a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”

Our Father, which art in Heaven. . . Matthew 6:9

Our Lord, of course, never intended that these words should be repeated sonorously, ritually, and mechanically, as in the liturgies of Christendom today. He was teaching great principles of intercession. In these few words He shows that every prayer should be an expression of intimacy, dignity, reverence, intelligence, and obedience. There should be simplicity with sincerity, brevity with beauty, and all in a spirit of trust and dependency. Well might we say, as did those early disciples, "Lord, teach us to pray."

– Jim Flanigan

Alone With Christ

Alone with Christ! Alone with Him
In sweet communion blest.
O happiness beyond compare,
In which the soul finds rest.

Alone with Christ! How sweet the thought
To listen at His feet
And hear His tender, gracious words,
His loving smile to greet.

Alone with Christ! How blest to know
In all our griefs and fears
He hears the harsh reproachful words
That cause such bitter tears.

Alone with Christ, Who knows so well
The depth of human pain
In hearts that yearn for sympathy,
Alas, so oft in vain.

Alone with Christ! Alone with Him,
In dark Gethsemane's hour;
When hearts lie crushed beneath their load
He lifts them by His power.

Alone with Christ! O portion sweet,
When earthly friends forsake
To share with Him the fellowship
Of which His saints partake.

Alone with Christ! Oh joy divine!
Alone with Him each day,
To breathe out from our inmost heart
What tongue can never say,

Alone with Christ! O joy complete!
O richest, fullest store.
To be with Jesus here 'tis bliss,
And life for evermore.

M. W.

Last of all He was seen of me also (1 Cor. 15:8)

A RISEN SAVIOUR

Paul was discussing the resurrection of the dead. He realized that on that great fact rested the weight of the Gospel message. It was easy enough to prove that Jesus had died, but to an incredulous world it was difficult to prove that he had risen from the dead; and whoever could not believe that great fact could not believe that

other great facts which stand or fall with it.

For instance, the Apostle presented that Jesus had left the heavenly glory and had become a man for the purpose of meeting the demands of the divine law against Adam and his race, involved by him. He could show the reasonableness of this logic. He has proven that as the whole world was condemned to death through Father Adam's disobedience it was absolutely necessary for an untainted life to be sacrificed in order to meet the penalty and to secure the release of the condemned race.

The Apostle had declared that Jesus had been faithful in his ministry in fully laying down his life and that the entire matter was pleasing and acceptable to the Heavenly Father. If so, surely God would not leave his Son in death, but would raise him from the dead. This fact the Apostle had repeatedly enunciated, showing that our Lord entered into his glory and reward and ascended up where he was before—to perfection on the spirit plane.

But all these claims fell lightly upon some of his hearers, who claimed that it was much easier to believe that Jesus never died at all, but merely transmuted, than to believe that he died for our sins and rose again for our justification; hence the Apostle's frequent reference to Christ's resurrection and his insistence upon it as absolutely necessary to Christian faith, for not only would the Heavenly Father's favour toward the Lord Jesus thus be shown, but the bulk of all the holy prophecies would remain unfulfilled unless Jesus arose from the dead.

In other words, a dead Redeemer would be of no advantage; matters would be just as unfavourable for the sinners as though Jesus had never come at all. Additionally, if the resurrection of Jesus was a questionable matter, how could those who disputed that great fact acknowledge the resurrection of the church and of the world? Paul emphasizes this also, declaring that "there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust," as a result of the redemptive work of Jesus—his dying for man's sins and his resurrection to glory to carry out the blessings secured by his death.

SEEN BY PAUL ALSO

Prosecuting his argument, the Apostle marshaled the whole chain of witnesses, except the women who first saw the Lord on the morning of His resurrection. He says, "He was seen of Cephas (Peter); then by the remainder of the twelve; then of above five hundred brethren at once; later, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles," when he ascended. Then comes the text: "Last of all he was seen of me also."

There is something pathetic in this reference to his own glimpse of Jesus. It called up the period of his own bigoted persecution of the church. It reminded him of his own responsibility in connection with the death of Stephen, and of the blind hatred which led him to persecute inoffensive fellow-creatures, simply because they believed that Jesus died and rose again, the very thing which he was now trying to testify to all having the hearing ear.

His memory went back to the madness which he had manifested in pursuing Christians even to Damascus, haling them to prison. Again he saw the great, blinding light from heaven, above the brightness of the noonday sun, his fall to the earth, and heard the voice speaking to him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecute thou me?" (Acts 9:1-9; 26:12-19) Again he remembered his astonishment at learning that those whom he had persecuted were not renegade and deceived Jews, but highly esteemed and acknowledged by this Great One, a wonderful sight! If Messiah was so great, so glorious, so powerful, he could believe in him, he could reverence him.

The objection which all Jews had to Jesus, and what they considered absolute weakness, was his apparent inability to accomplish the things foretold by the prophets. They said, It is foolish to think of a man without an army and without wealth claiming to be a king. It is still more foolish for him to claim that he is the Messianic king, who is to be above all kings, and before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess.

To them it seemed that when he was crucified a demonstration had been given that he was not the Messiah. Was not the Messiah to live forever, and was he not to reign successfully as King of kings and Lord of lords? Was it not, therefore, proven that any man whom the Jews or the Romans could crucify, could put to death, must have been an impostor? The persecution of the followers of Jesus was merely with a view to stamping out a new religion, which, it was feared, would do harm to Israel in that it would call in question the hopes of Israel respecting a coming King and his kingdom. Thus Saul of Tarsus had felt himself fully justified in persecuting all of that way of thinking—for "the good of the cause," as so many persecutors have said.

PAUL'S NEW VIEW

The honesty of Saul of Tarsus led him to be just as honest after he got his eyes of understanding open as he had previously been with them closed. It took him a little while to get the proper focus; then he saw and could explain to others the necessity for the death of Jesus and how it was typified in the sacrifices of the law and how the divinely arranged plan had made this great sacrifice in order thereby to more fully show forth the divine justice, wisdom, love and power.

Now he saw, not only the need for Jesus to come in the flesh and to give himself a ransom-price for all, but he saw equally the necessity for his resurrection, not in the flesh, but in the spirit, that he might be a fully qualified Ruler and Saviour—not only to save his people from the Romans, the Assyrians, and from all other human enemies, but also to save them from Satan, from sin, from sickness, from sorrow, from death. Ah, now he saw how great Messiah must be in order to meet the necessities of the case!

The matter .changed immediately in his mind; instead of a human Saviour and Messiah and an earthly king, God had prepared a Heavenly One, partaker of the divine nature, glorious, far above angels, principalities and powers and every name that is named. Now he saw that the sufferings of Jesus had a twofold value. First, they were necessary for man's release from the death sentence, and, secondly, they were necessary as a demonstration of the loyalty of Jesus. Now he saw that

God, in preparing to bring many sons to glory, determined first to prove the loyalty of him whom he had invited to become the Captain of our Salvation, and that this was done by the arrangement which necessitated Jesus' death.

The climax of the argument was reached when he found that God not only had raised up Jesus from the dead, but that additionally he had bestowed upon him the glory, honor and immortality of the divine nature, of which Saul had a demonstration or proof in the blinding flash of light which felled him to the earth, and in the voice which said to him alone, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2.

Fear Not, Little Flock

THOUGH the church of Christ is a little flock, it is of priceless value. It has been purchased with his blood. It is the flock of God, however divided and distracted; and though scattered in the dark and cloudy day, yet it will be gathered together at last by our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep.

But even now it is under his care, his supervision, his control, and no grievous wolves can devour those who listen to God and to the Word of his grace. No one can pluck even the feeblest lamb in all that flock from the hands of the Heavenly Father. The Great Shepherd cares for his little ones; and as there are flowers that bloom in desert wastes and lonely valleys which are seen by no human eye and watered by no human hand, but are as fair and fragrant as those which share the most costly culture, so the Good Shepherd feeds his own flock in the wilderness, in green pastures, and by the side of still waters; restores, and guides, and comforts, and protects them, even to the end.

"He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," and while he feeds them, how blessed to know that "he that keepeth Israel shall never slumber or sleep."

Repentance

(A helping hand for beginners) (Convention Address)

One of the earliest messages in the New V/ Testament and therefore in the Gospel Age was the call to repent. "*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" (Matthew 3:2) Indeed this was the first public instruction recorded in the New Testament. It demands earnest consideration.

John the Baptist was certainly addressing Israel and many see the call to repent as particularly related to the many breaches of the Law God gave to Israel. From our vantage point, however, we ought to see the message as a call for repentance from all sin and, more importantly, as applicable to all people. The Apostle Paul declared to the people of Athens that this is exactly what God requires. "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*" (Acts 17:30)

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

Dictionaries describe REPENTANCE as 'compunction or contrition for wrongdoing or sin', regret for any past action', 'penitence' and 'sorrow'. It seems that it can refer either to the 'act of repenting' or to the 'state of mind in which penitence is felt'.

However the meaning given by The Macquarie Dictionary as the theological meaning of the word 'contrition' is particularly interesting. It refers to 'perfect contrition' as 'sorrow for and detestation of sin with a true purpose of amendment, ARISING FROM a love of God for His own perfections' (God's own perfections). That 'perfect contrition' is contrasted by The Macquarie Dictionary with 'imperfect contrition' arising 'from some inferior motive, as fear of divine punishment'.

THIS IS REPENTANCE

As explained, that definition is applied to the word 'contrition' which in turn is one of the meanings of repentance. For our understanding of what repentance means, it is well worth repeating. It is 'sorrow for and detestation of sin with a true purpose of amendment, ARISING FROM a love of God for His own perfections'. The contrast is also good. Repentance arising from some inferior motive, such as fear of divine punishment is certainly less than perfect.

In this matter the dictionary is more in accord with the Bible than the large denominational institutions. Most organised religions teach that fear is the only way to get men to turn to God. The Bible says otherwise. *"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"* (Romans 2:4)

The reality is that *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."* (1 John 4:18)

GOD'S PLAN

The beginner needs to see how repentance fits into God's Plan. He or she must be led to understand that God is still in the process of creation. He is creating a perfect world. It requires perfect people to dwell in it. To make people perfect, God has exposed them to sin but has given each a free will and a conscience to know what is right and what is wrong. It is more than a set of rules. It is an instinctive awareness that God is, that God is good, and that He requires His creatures to be good also.

Completion of God's perfect world will require much instruction in the resurrection. Foremost will be people becoming aware that all the troubles in this present world have resulted from mankind departing from God's standard. After coming back from the grave, people will know immediately that God is, and will be quick to understand that Christ's sacrifice has ransomed them from the death they deserved as sinners.

Until the resurrection, most of mankind will not have eyes to see and ears to hear the lesson behind the thousands of years of pain and suffering which has resulted from the one disobedience of Adam. Once having been redeemed and become aware of the consequences of disobedience, surely most of mankind will then obey God in their own absolute free choice.

Whether it be in this Gospel Age or after resurrection into God's Kingdom, eternal life involves a necessary progression. This could be described as a divine staircase and the principal steps can be called CONVICTION, REPENTANCE, SUBMISSION, ACCEPTANCE, FAITH, JUSTIFICATION, LOVE. For those called of God in this age, there is the invitation to the further step of CONSECRATION and God's response BEGETTAL.

STARTING POINT

Some may be surprised that there is a step before repentance. Indeed some may consider conviction as part of repentance and accordingly it is fitting to mention it here.

Conviction is the awareness of our undone condition. That is to say we stand convinced or convicted by our own knowledge, or by God's word, that we have fallen short of God's standard. Conviction must come first, simply because one does not repent unless there is some action or state requiring repentance. Similarly one cannot be saved unless one knows of one's need to be saved. The surfer who does not know he is caught in an undertow does not signal for a life-saver.

CONVICTION – WHY REPENT?

One of the most difficult things for a beginner to understand is that he or she is a sinner. They think "I have not killed anybody. I do not steal. I do not go around injuring people." They feel "I am as good as the next person". The problem is simply that the next person is not good enough.

"As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one:" (Rom 3:10)

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" (Rom 3:23)

The Living Bible makes this point well: *"For the truth about God is known to them instinctively; God has put this knowledge in their hearts. Since earliest times men have seen the earth and sky and all God made, and have known of His existence and great eternal power. So they will have no excuse."* (Romans 1:19-20)

If some breach of the written law is sought, then the command not to covet will condemn everyone. Less definitive but even more common is failure to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself, and failure to love one's enemies. More to the point however is that each of us has been distant from God and the standard of conduct necessary for a perfect world.

REAL REPENTANCE

Repentance ought to follow close behind conviction but it must be real. To be content with old habits is the converse of repentance. The heart must earnestly want to come to God's standard for repentance to be real. Whilst we will often fail to attain that standard, the sincere desire must remain.

Awareness of guilt means nothing if one wants to be a sinner. The surfer in an undertow who wants to commit suicide does not signal for a lifesaver. Repentance opens the way for faith - faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour Who can possibly save us from the natural penalty of our sins. As the Bible says, in Romans 6:23, "*The wages of sin is death*".

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Tim.2:5,6)

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43)

CONVERSION – TURNING AROUND

The call for repentance sometimes stands alone and sometimes is linked with other expressions such as faith. Acts 3:19, however, takes us back to the meaning of our word. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19)

The dictionary proviso - "with a true purpose of amendment" - indicates that, at least in the 'contrition' meaning of repentance, conversion is part of 'repentance'. The reason 'conversion' was not included as a separate step on the Divine Staircase is simply that it was regarded as part of repentance. Acts 3:19 then is repeating the conversion aspect of repentance. It certainly needs heavy emphasis.

The point is that it is not sufficient to regret, even to regret deeply. There must also be a turning point around to go towards God instead of away from God. Natural man goes away from God having been born a sinner and having inherited a sinful nature. Additional to being convicted or convinced of this fact and regretting it, it is also necessary for salvation, either now or in the resurrection, to change direction. Of course, the earlier one draws nigh unto God through Jesus Christ, the greater the spiritual profit.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." (James 4:8)

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINS US. (2 COR.5:14)

Paul made it clear that the natural response to Christ - to a real appreciation of God's goodness - His grace - His free gift of His Son to take away our sin - is just such a change of direction. In Romans 6:2, Paul said "*How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*"

The context repudiates any suggestions of "*Do whatever you like, it will only mean that God will pour more grace upon you.*" "*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*" Surely, an awareness of the pain of real repentance should prevent anything contrary to God's will.

MOVING ON

Repentance is not an end in itself. To be repentant and stop there, would be very cold comfort. Regretting the past and turning around naturally means that the one who repents wants something better.

Although the further steps on the divine staircase are not really part of our subject, some view further up the staircase is necessary to inspire and encourage over the difficult step of repentance. Indeed, some knowledge of the step of accepting Christ as one's own personal Saviour and being aware of His ability to save is needed to make real repentance bearable:

"For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Tim 1:12)

Even further ahead, there is comfort and the prospects of great joy in Paul's report of his own position:

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:13-14)

FORGETTING OLD THINGS

The prize of the High Calling is a great incentive but outside our present scope. The thought of *forgetting those things which are behind* is however appropriate to repentance. After turning around to go towards God,

one ought not to hanker after the same old things. Remember Lot's wife. The way to God is full of interests in the good things of life.

J.B. Phillips renders part of 1 Peter 1:14 "Don't let your character be moulded by the desires of your ignorant days." How then should it be moulded? Paul explained this to the Galatians "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." (Gal 5:13).

There is another way in which we should be *forgetting those things which are behind*. The burden of past actions could be too heavy. Without taking away the knowledge and therefore the lesson, the beginner must realise that the burden can be safely left at the feet of our Saviour.

DETESTING SIN

The lesson behind repentance is, of course, the seriousness of disobedience to God. That is shown by its heinous effects. We repent of the sinful nature with which we were born recognising that it was the result of Adam's disobedience. Additionally, we repent of our own sins and deplore the fact that they added to the burden which our Saviour carried to the cross.

The importance of that lesson can be seen when we realise that all the suffering in the thousands of years since Adam first let sin into the world followed from that one act of disobedience. In the resurrection, all will need to be very aware of the seriousness of sin. It cannot be permitted to occur again.

Obviously, God requires us to detest sin. That is the six thousand year lesson. It is a major part of repentance.

SORROW FOR SIN

As the beginner progresses, the question will arise - to what extent will or should repentance or sorrow for sin remain with us? It can be said that we will always regret having sinned, but where does sorrow for sin end and anguish over sin begin? We are promised peace, but peace requires release from anguish.

In a sinless society, awareness of past guilt would be punishment enough. Continuing, deeply sincere repentance might well be too heavy burden to bear - but Jesus said "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28) We can safely lay this burden at His feet.

At the same time, sorrow carries its own blessing. Remember the beautiful record of the meal at Simon's house in Luke 7:40-47. It is suggested that the memory of past failures and the knowledge that our Lord has redeemed us will lead to deeper appreciation of Christ's love. That appreciation will in turn strengthen and enlarge our love for Him.

Simon thought harshly about the woman at Jesus' feet. Our Lord responded with the parable of the creditor who forgave two debtors one with a large debt and one owing less. Simon acknowledged that the one forgiven most would love most. Jesus confirmed this and said "to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

IN CONCLUSION

The arrangement is miraculous! We sinned - Jesus Christ died to redeem us. We come to realise all that he endured; we detest sin. God raised Jesus from the grave. We remember our sin and repent, accepting Him as our Saviour. He shares the burden of our repentance. Our love increases - how we feel the embrace of His love!

Romans 5:1 told us that faith and peace go hand in hand. The message to Simon surely enlarges that duo to an eternal foursome:

REPENTANCE, FAITH, PEACE and even more LOVE.

(FG : 1993)