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## The Value of Knowledge.

(Convention Address)

“We have received. . . the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Cor 2:12.)

THE desire for knowledge was awakened very early in the mind of man, but the cost of obtaining this from unauthorized channels has been heavy. The wise man said—“For in much wisdom is much grief ; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow.” (Eccel. 1:18.)

This was experienced by mother Eve in the Garden of Eden. The tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:9), in the midst of the garden, was observed by Eve as possessing a quality to make one wise. There are right and wrong channels for learning wisdom and knowledge, and our first parents learned this early in the experience of life ; the Lord permitting this in order to teach valuable lessons.

Taking the Biblical account of the early history of man, it is stated that Satan enticed and deceived mother Eve to obtain knowledge the forbidden way. God had said—“Ye shall surely die,” if disobedient (Gen. 2:9), but the serpent (Satan) said—“Ye shall not surely die.” Whereby it has since been proved that by hearkening to the commands of God is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom, as expressed in later times by the sages of the past. “The fear (reverence) of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,” (Prov. 1:7) ; a knowledge that will lift out of disaster to eternal life, through the way God has appointed.

But man from earliest times sought out many inventions, as a wise man observed—“Behold, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions,” (devices), (Eccel. 7:29.) Now we live at a time in the history of mankind when these, inventions and devices are increasing at an alarming rate, filling the hearts of those who invent them with fear and apprehension.

Only recently (Jan. 25th, 1960) the Professor of Physics at the University of Sydney (Professor Messel) on T.V., is reported to have said—“Remember this, In one decade man has learned and achieved as much as .his forbears in the previous history of mankind.” That is saying something; yes, and this knowledge has come suddenly into the life of mankind.

Another great man—a sage and prophet—foretold this of our time, and tells us also when this would happen in the history of mankind, and the effect of it upon the world. (Dan. 12:1-4) The prophet Daniel, after having in previous chapters traced the prophetic history of mankind through the power of inspiration, is instructed in verse 4—“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the ,book, even to the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Verse 9—“But go thy way, Daniel; for the words are sealed till the time of the end.” Verse 10—“The ,wise shall understand.”

Professor Messel is corroborating a fact, whether he is aware of it or not, that Daniel foretold more than 2,000 years ago — the present, sudden increase of knowledge, quick travel and invention; and with it will come (and has come—is now present) trouble, distress, sorrows. Truly Eccel. 1:18 is again applicable — “He that increases knowledge increases sorrow,” not having the wisdom and power to apply it to the best advantage of all concerned. This is especially located at the time of the end of the age.

This increase of knowledge has brought along with it trouble and distress, as Jesus also foretold—"Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of the heaven shall be shaken." (Luke 21:25,26.) But happy are those who know that beyond this acute distress of nations, the power of the Lord will intervene and bring deliverance to distressed and despairing mankind. He will bring peace and security to all who submit to His righteous control; His kingdom shall rise upon the ruin, of the old order, and shall increase to the uttermost parts of the earth, and His will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The prophet Daniel said—"At the time of the end," of the age "the wise shall understand." These know and appreciate the revealed plan of God and the glorious things reserved in heaven for the followers of the Lord, and the happiness and harmony which will be established on a perfected earth among mankind, when national boundaries cease to exist, and when love, justice, and truth shall prosper.

This "knowledge is pleasant to the soul," (Prov. 2:10.), and naturally all faithful Christians want to know of this knowledge and instruction which has brought comfort and joy into many lives, as the proverb says—"Wise men lay up knowledge." Wisdom also declares—"Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold." (Prov. 10:14; 8:10.)

The knowledge of God and His Word is of primary importance; it is the basis of faith and obedience. A living faith must have a foundation in the Divine revelation, the Bible. It alone shows what righteousness is and that there is none righteous, no, not one. It alone shows how sin came into the world, and that personal faith in a personal Saviour is the only ground for a hope of a personal salvation.

Knowledge is the lamp which guides the way and shows the will of God, as the Apostle Paul says—"We do not cease praying on your behalf that you may be filled, as to the exact knowledge of his will, with all spiritual wisdom and understanding; to walk worthily of the Lord, pleasing him in all things; bringing forth fruit by every good work, and increasing in the exact knowledge of God; being strengthened with all strength according to his glorious power, for all patience and endurance with joy." (Col. 1:9-11, Diaglott.) Here the Apostle Paul twice emphasizes the importance of an *exact knowledge* of God's will.

It is important to increase and be filled with an exact knowledge of the Lord's will, accompanied by thorough wisdom and discernment in spiritual things. Although the apostle says in verses 4 and 5 that the Colossian Christians had faith and love, and also hope, these things were not the burden of his prayer, but the increase of exact knowledge, wisdom, understanding, patience and endurance. This evidently gives proper balance to the exercise of faith, love and hope. Much wisdom and spiritual discernment is necessary after we have received knowledge, for there are many mixtures of truth and error presented in large and small parcels. Even love needs directing by knowledge. Hence the Apostle Paul prays for the Philippian Christians—"And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ." (Phil. 1:9,10, R.S.V.).

A knowledge of God's will means more than the knowledge that God has a will. It means an experimental knowledge, acquaintance and fellowship with the spirit and character of God, which invigorates us and causes us to do the things God does, in the measure that lies within our power or position. The influence of this tends to perfect the new creature, into closer and closer conformity to the Pattern, Christ Jesus. The apostle gives this thought of intimate association and fellowship with Christ when he says—"That I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death (Jesus' sacrificial death); if by any means (or in any way) I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. 3:10,11.)

In Col. 3:10, the Apostle Paul again shows the importance of knowledge—"Put on the new man, being renewed by knowledge, according to a likeness of him who created him." (Diaglott.) The new creature, or "new man" is refreshed, renewed, invigorated by knowledge after the image of God who created Christ. The apostle tells in this third chapter what things to put off, and what things to put on. The former customs and works of the old, natural man are put off and new characteristics put on, which begins at consecration, when we yielded to God and righteousness and the supreme aim of development we see to be love. Without knowledge we could accomplish nothing; knowledge shows us the will of God on the one hand, and the selfishness and vanity of our fallen human nature on the other. It shows us what things to put on; it shows us the Lord's characteristics and principles, what His spirit or disposition is which we are to imitate—renewed by knowledge after the image of God who created it. A new creature is being created, not a renewing of the old nature.

We have the new will from the beginning, but it requires some time to transform our minds, for our minds tend to continue to bend earthward; gradually we see things more and more from the Divine standpoint, and faith and

obedience increases. The new man is God's workmanship. Although this creative work is not yet completed, nevertheless we are assured that God is able and will complete this by various means and experiences of His own choosing to suit each individual. It is for us to respond—"Thy will be done"—and grow in grace and knowledge.

Furthermore, it is the power of this knowledge of God and the application of it that enables us to escape the pollutions of the world, (2 Pet. 2:20) ; and strengthens the determination to walk worthily in the Christian way which is pleasing to God, and we are thus able to bring forth fruit by every good work. In other words, the right use of this knowledge encourages us in the work of character development, leading to praise and giving of thanks to God, our Father, for His glorious power through this knowledge, which stimulates us in every direction. The strong conviction of this strengthens us to endure cheerfully all things that God permits to come into or touch our lives, thus producing also patience and longsuffering, endurance. So great is this change in our lives, and in its pursuits, hopes and aims, etc., that it is referred to as a deliverance from darkness to light; indeed the truth of God is always represented as light, and His people as children of light.

The Apostle Peter says that grace and peace are multiplied unto us through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "and through his divine power he has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness." (2 Pet. 1:2,3.) If we had no knowledge of these "all things" they would be valueless to us ; likewise, the precious promises which are another means to an end—the attainment of the divine nature—would not accomplish their purpose if we had no knowledge of them, for no knowledge means no faith in them.

The Apostle Paul also says that a knowledge of the promises cleanses us "from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. 7:1.) What would be our position and character if we had no knowledge of these? God gives knowledge for a purpose; He establishes our faith by granting us knowledge, and then faith takes hold upon things eternal and invisible. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," Jesus said. (John 8:32.) This knowledge of the truth also gives freedom, liberty.

The increase of general knowledge is greatly stirring the world, filling many hearts with fear and foreboding. Knowledge, enlightenment, is causing especially the backward nations to throw off the shackles of oppression, bondage and ignorance, and to claim the liberty which is theirs by right — the liberty to live decent lives and receive a share of the common bounties and blessings enjoyed now by more advanced nations. This diffusion of knowledge is symbolically referred to as lightning flashes,—"His (God's) lightnings enlightened the world ; the earth (society) saw, and trembled." (Psa. 97:4.)

It has been truthfully said that knowledge is a means to an end, and the ultimate end is eternal life. Jesus said—"In this consists the life of the ages, in knowing Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3, Weymouth.) Increasing in the knowledge of God is another way of pleasing Him ; He is pleased with those who desire to understand what He is, what He does, and what He purposes and commands.

God does not always give us complete understanding of all details of a given instruction or experience, but the outline merely, at times as in the case of Abraham. God told Abraham of His purpose to bless all nations through him and his offspring, but many details were omitted, and thus in Abraham's experience much room was left for the exercise of faith, and gradually his faith was strengthened and perfected by experience and contact with God. It was a *developed* faith, and earned for him three titles—"Friend of God," "the father of the faithful," and "heir of the world," because he showed his faith by his works.

The opposite of knowledge is ignorance and foolishness. Prov. 15:14 states—"The mouth of fools feed on foolishness." Psalm 32:9 reads—"Be not so as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding," and Isaiah said, speaking for God—"My people are gone into captivity because they have no knowledge." (Isa. 5:13.) Jesus also accused the scribes and Pharisees,—"Ye have taken away the key of knowledge." (Luke 11:52.) The people were famished for a proper knowledge of God and correct interpretations of His requirements. The religious leaders had plans and theories of their own which they considered better and wiser than the dispensational truths proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles. Even so, now, as then, ignorance, rather than enmity, is the cause of opposition to the Present Truth of God's Word and advancing purposes. It was in ignorance that the Jewish leaders crucified the Lord of glory.

Ignorance is the excuse of much of the wrong that had been done in the world amongst the Lord's followers all down the age. For instance, the Apostle Paul said, before his conversion, that he ignorantly and in unbelief blasphemed, injured and persecuted the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. (1 Tim. 1:13.) Millions of people are in bondage to Great Babylon for the want of knowledge. "My people are gone into captivity because they have no knowledge," is still true, as it was in the days of Israel. Truly, spiritual life is quenched because of fear of men and their organisations. "Where there is no vision the people perish." (Prov. 29:18.)

What would be our position today except for the “vision” of Present Truth? The knowledge of this has delivered us from the bondage of Babylon the Great. The truth has made us free, giving freedom and liberty in Christ, freedom from fear, freedom from formalism and sectarianism, freedom to think for ourselves, freedom to believe that truth is revealed to all faithful Christians without the medium of a clergy class, or self-appointed priesthood organisations. Only as each member enters into the freedom of the truth, and is separated from every other head but Christ can there be unity of one faith and one hope, for “One is your Master, and all ye are brethren.” This unity is characterized by one eternal spirit, the spirit of love, which dwells in God and Christ and is being created in every member of the Body of Christ.

What would we be doing today without Present Truth? Where would we be if we had no knowledge of the light for the last days—dispensational truth? Even the best and most enthusiastic work that is being done apart from the Present Truth movement must and does fall far short of that full satisfaction and spiritual discernment and transforming power in the life, which only truth can accomplish, and which can be seen now in the revelation of the harmony of the Bible. But one missing this great boon and continuing to embrace the mixture of truth and error must still have a certain amount of perplexity, uncertainty and dissatisfaction in the mind and, outlook concerning the destiny of mankind as a whole. But knowledge of Present Truth has given us freedom from this—the freedom of sonship. As Jesus said, in John 15:15,—“I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” Therefore, “search the Scriptures.”

### Booklet for August’s “Peoples Paper.”

A booklet entitled—“Israel As I Saw It” will take the place of August “Peoples Paper,” being an address given by Brother Lanowick while in Australia. This should be appreciated generally, and serve also as helpful to pass out to all interested in God’s promises to Israel.

## The Institute's Work

AT the close of April another year's work for the Berean Bible Institute has been completed, and we desire to express gratitude and thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for His blessings and favours bestowed upon the efforts to serve His cause in association with our brethren throughout Australia and overseas. Appreciation is also expressed to all dear friends who have co-operated in various ways in connection with the work of the Institute, as unto the Lord.

Our brethren will understand that the efforts in the service of the Lord are carried on each year on well established lines, and are mainly directed to encourage all who are walking in the narrow way of the Gospel Age calling, to which they have been invited through an understanding of God's Word, and the drawing of His spirit. The proclaiming of the message of the kingdom is also a witness to others who are feeling after the truths of God's Word—desiring something substantial upon which to base faith and hope for the future. Our monthly "Peoples Paper" provides a means of contact with all the brethren and a considerable number of other interested people, and the appreciation of the "P. Paper" expressed over the past year has been most encouraging.

To all who have contributed to the pages of the "Peoples Paper" sincere thanks is extended, and should other friends have helpful articles appropriate for publication, they are invited to forward them along. Our desire has been to provide a helpful variety of Bible subjects in the little periodical from month to month, dealing with the harvest message of Present Truth, of a devotional nature, and also containing the Plan of Salvation as a whole.

Early this year it was necessary to increase the subscription of "Peoples Paper" to 6/- per year, but with the increase in postage charges and production costs generally, a deficiency is still required to be made up from the General Tract Fund. As in past years, considerable numbers of the "Paper" were distributed free amongst the interested during the past twelve months, so it is felt that the expense to the General Fund is well used in the service of the Lord. All subscribers are welcome to extra copies of the "P Paper" for passing out where good may be done, and those friends who supply subscriptions for others who are interested in Bible truths are helping very well in the work. Of particular assistance is the proof reading of the monthly "Paper" on the part of some of our friends and which is greatly appreciated, as also is the folding and wrapping ready for the post.

Tracts are available for distribution where good may be done, and it is a good plan for the friends to have a good supply on hand for passing out on all suitable occasions, these tracts being provided by the General Fund. Consolation Cards are also being forwarded to the bereaved by some of our friends, and in this way a message of comfort from God's Word is supplied to those who respond.

Throughout the past year public lectures have been continued from time to time, and appreciation has been manifest by the brethren who have encouraged others to attend. By this witness to the Divine Plan of the Ages some are prompted to examine the Bible with renewed interest, and also attend the regular studies on the Scriptures. Reference to the lectures on Israel by one of our brethren from U.S.A., was made in last month's "Peoples Paper."

The witness to the kingdom message through the use of the radio has also continued over the year past, and the blessing from the Lord has also been realised in these efforts, for which we thank and praise our Heavenly Father. Appreciation is also expressed to the numerous friends who have assisted in this feature of the work, all done as unto the Lord.

Some very good enquiries have been received during the year through the radio witness, and considerable literature has been supplied with benefit to a number of these friends. The same radio stations have been used in Geelong (Victoria), Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, and in the case of the last mentioned, the brethren in that area continue to meet the cost of the broadcasts direct. To all who respond to the discussions over the air, copies of the printed broadcasts are supplied, also numbers of the "Peoples Paper" and other appropriate literature. Friends who are in a position to make the broadcasts known to others are invited to co-operate in this work of witness, in the service of the Lord.

The financial side of the work generally, and with the radio witness is revealed from the General Tract Fund and Radio Fund presented below. The voluntary contributions from our friends have enabled the work to be carried on, in the Lord's providence, and all the loving sacrificing with assistance in this way is warmly appreciated, as unto the Lord Himself. We may not know how much longer the opportunities and privileges of serving the cause of truth shall remain with us at this end of the Gospel Age, but so long as the "holding back of the winds" continues (Rev. 7:1-3), we may be sure that the Lord is pleased with the efforts of His people to encourage one another in the Christian way, as well as sounding forth the glad message of the kingdom to all who have ears to hear. The prayers of the brethren are requested that the Lord's blessing and guidance may be upon the efforts to serve His cause of truth in this part of the harvest field, as well as in all other areas, to His praise. "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal ; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." (John 4:36.)

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4KQ and 6KY	.. 55 4 7
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## Approved Unto God.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.”—2 Tim. 2:15.

THIS Text does not say, “Study the Scriptures,” but “Study to show thyself approved” — study to know what God would approve. And yet it means, first of all, to study the Revelation He has made. Then, after having come to some knowledge of the Scriptures, we must meditate upon them and consider how the Word is applicable to all of life’s affairs. Thus we would study the nature of everything with which we come in contact, as to whether it is good or evil. The word “study” here is used with very much the same thought as when the Apostle says, “Study to be quiet.”

Evidently the central thought of this expression is the approving of ourselves to God, not to men. It is proper enough that we should have the approval of all good men and good women. But our study, primarily, should not be along this line. First, we should study to please God—to be approved of God. We notice that there is a contemplative study, such as David speaks of when he says, “I meditate upon thy Law day and night”—to see how that Law would work out its height and depth, its length and breadth of influence upon himself. And so the Apostles thought here is that it should be our chief aim to please God.

“Rightly dividing the Word of Truth” would signify the proper application of the Word of Truth; the understanding of how and when and where it should be applied and what was the purpose and thought and Plan of the Divine Mind in the giving of this Word of Truth, the Word of God’s Message. Up to the advent of our Lord, God’s Message had been given chiefly through the Old Testament Scriptures. Then God’s Message was attested by Him who came from heaven. Additionally, our Lord left twelve chosen Apostles to be His special mouthpieces, to increase the Word of Truth, to increase the Word of knowledge, to increase the Word of explanation of the Divine Plan. Everything, therefore, that Timothy could recognise as being the Lord’s Message he was to give heed to. For instance, one part of God’s Message applies to the past, a part applies only to the Jews, still another part applies to Christians in the present life, and yet another part to their future hopes.

And so, as we get the matter rightly divided before our minds, we get the true understanding, the special enlightenment needed in our day, and we are enabled to rightly divide the Word better than did our fathers, so that today we can see, as our fathers did not see, the teaching of God’s Word respecting the “high calling” and “restitution” — the spiritual portion of blessing for the Church and the human portion of blessing for the world. We also see something about the times and seasons—which apply to the Church and which to the blessing of the world.

Thus, in our day, to rightly divide the Word of Truth necessitates the taking cognisance of everything that seems to be of the Lord and that throws any light upon the Word, and thus we may be able to “rightly divide” it. We must always bear in mind that in the Scriptures of the Old Testament “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy spirit,” and that the Lord also said of the Apostles : “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

We are not to forget that the Lord promised that He would guide His people in the way of the Truth and show them things to come. We are to “study” to show ourselves approved—study the doctrine and endeavour to have our course of conduct harmonise with it—study to perform faithfully the duties of a loyal soldier of the cross of Christ.

The Christian soldier must study to perform even the smallest duty in a manner creditable to his calling; he must not permit himself to become entangled with other things which do not relate to his duties as a soldier and thus be side-tracked. The Christian soldier who turns aside to seek some personal, temporal advantage to the detriment of his duties as a soldier is to that extent an unfaithful soldier and likely to be drawn out of the ranks entirely.

“Study to show thyself approved.” Study the Word ; study yourself, that you may become well acquainted with yourself; that you may know your talents for service—in what direction they lie, and what are your weak points and how they may be guarded against — that you may know both your abilities and your shortcomings. Then study to avoid error and to shun all foolish questions and profane and vain babblings. Remember that only “the foundation of God standeth sure” • that all other foundations are worthless and that all other theories must come to naught. But “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, ‘The Lord knoweth them that are His.’ And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”—2 Tim. 2:19.

There is much significance **in** the word “study” and it is important to note that this Divine injunction is given to the Church, to those who are believers in Christ and who have consecrated their lives to His service. Having been reckonedly cleansed from sin, we are to give all diligence to the work of studying to make this reckoned cleansing, this imputed righteousness, an actual thing, to the extent of our ability. It is purely of Divine grace that we are reckoned righteous before we are actually so. Looking at our hearts and seeing in them not only our good and honest intentions, but also our desire for righteousness, and our efforts to become righteous in the way He would approve,

God accepts the will for the deed. Accordingly, He counts us as righteous now and treats us as His children, since we have been redeemed from the curse and have accepted His gracious provision for reconciliation.

Let us, then, study our hearts to see that we are striving daily to cast out all the old leaven of sin; to be sure that we are not content to allow it to remain in us and work in us ; otherwise we prove by our course that our love for righteousness is growing weaker. Happy are those who find that they are not merely working down the leavened mass occasionally and allowing it again and again to ferment, but are casting it out, by constantly resisting sin, by cleansing their thoughts, words and deeds with the Truth and cultivating the blessed “fruits of the Spirit”—love, joy, peace, etc.

Only the studious find the way to Divine approval and acceptance. Let us study to see that our lives are an honor to the cause we have espoused; that we abstain from even the appearance of evil; that we are circumspect in all our conversation, in our conduct—watching our thoughts, our lips, our lives. Let us study to be diligent in every duty, performing it with a ready mind and with joy and gladness of heart. Let us never lose sight of the fact that we are soldiers, and that as true soldiers we are to learn to “endure hardness.”

A soldier has many trivial duties to perform and he is as really doing his duty as a soldier when he is polishing his armor, foraging, cooking his meals, cleaning camp, or building bridges for the army to pass over, as when he is fighting the enemy. Such things are incidental work, but are necessary and entirely consistent with his commission as a soldier and should not be regarded as entanglements and hindrances. These duties cannot be disregarded nor carelessly done without a measure of unfaithfulness.

So with the Christian soldier. The routine of life—housework, shop work, daily toil, anything, everything, incidental to a proper and honest provision of “things needful” for ourselves and those dependent upon us for support as well as for provision for the prosecution and care of the Lord’s work—all this is a proper part of our engagement as soldiers of the Lord.

The Apostle Peter was as truly serving the Lord when catching the fish from whose mouth he got the coin with which to pay his Master’s taxes and his own, as when proclaiming, on the day of Pentecost, the “raising up” and ascension of the Lord. The Apostle Paul was as truly a soldier of the cross and doing his proper work as such when making tents (rather than be chargeable to any) as when at Mars Hill he preached Jesus and the resurrection. Whatever is done with a view to the glory and honor of the Lord, the Captain of our salvation, or for the benefit of any of our fellow-soldiers, or for our own preparation for this warfare, or in the discharge of obligations which our Captain has recognised and approved, is proper work for us as soldiers and is not entanglement in the affairs of this life.

“Godliness with contentment is great gain.” —1 Tim. 6:6.

There are few temptations more common to ardent spirits than that which leads them to repine at the lot in which they are cast, believing that in some other situation they could serve God better. If each such man had the spirit of self-surrender, the spirit of the cross, it would not matter to him whether he were doing the work of the mainspring, or one of the inferior parts. It is his duty to try and be himself—simply to try to do his own duty.

F. W. Robertson.

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## The Great Salvation.

“How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” Heb. 2:3.

THIS question is addressed to Christians, and not to the unconverted, as is often supposed. This the context proves. The writer of the epistle addressed it to the church. It seems particularly adapted to converted Jews, who were familiar with the writings of the Old Testament. We have in this epistle some of the most earnest exhortations to be faithful to the Lord, and the very best reasons and motives given for our encouragement. The text and context are of this character and if we are Christians we will find such applicable to us. It is important that we should, in order to get the benefit of the exhortation, remember that it means us. “How shall we escape, if we neglect?” On account of certain facts referred to in the first chapter, the second opens with: “Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” This certainly must refer to Christians and there is danger of losing what we have received, unless we do give heed.

The idea is suggested that neglect of the truths would cause them gradually to slip away from us. Backsliding is a gradual process, caused by neglect of truth and neglect of duty in obeying the truth. These are related to each other, and it seems that either may come as the cause of the other. The only safeguard against backsliding and consequent falling away, if persisted in, is to advance. Standing still seems to be impossible. In the sixth chapter the apostle seems to make falling away the alternative of going on to perfection. The Lord has arranged our life as a current against which we must row if we would go up, and He has placed the reward, the Great Salvation, at the head of the stream. If we would gain the prize, we must “run,” “strive,” “fight” or “overcome.” If we fold our arms, we shall glide downward. It is easy to go with the multitude, but is difficult to stem the flood, and we may be sure, “This vain world is not a friend to grace, to help us on to God.”

What is worth having is worth striving for, and God has in both natural and spiritual things placed the valuable out of sight, or where it can be gained with difficulty. Our appreciation of the value of anything is shown by the earnestness with which we strive for it. We should be constantly seeking to know more of the truth of God for the purpose of obeying it. If we seek for truth merely as a theory to gratify our own curiosity, or for the purpose of showing our ability to cope with those who hold error, our intellect may be filled at the expense of our affections. Religion without love to both God and man, is as the body without the spirit—dead.

Charity or love is the crowning excellency of Christianity, and is necessary to fit us for the Great Salvation. “Add to your faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness ; and charity.” 2 Peter 1:5-7. Love is last and greatest. These additions secure the abundant entrance into the Kingdom of God. (Ver. 11.) Without the last all is vain. Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not love I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have (the gift of) prophecy, and understand all mysteries. and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. (Cor. 13:1,2.) There is a kind of knowledge that cannot be gained from books, but comes by experience as a fruit of the indwelling of the spirit of God. “He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love.”

Love is an experience, and includes in it an earnest desire for the well-being of the object loved. Until we have sympathy and love for mankind, such as would prompt us to do all in our power for their salvation, we cannot know God. To know Him thus is to be in unison or fellowship with Him, and hence is eternal life.

