



**Volume 79 No.5 MELBOURNE, SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER
1996**

“For the Joy Set Before Him”

(Why Jesus Came down from Heaven)

“I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” – John 6:51.

There are many verses of Scripture which plainly I show us that Jesus had a prehuman existence in heaven with God, His Heavenly Father, before He came down to earth as “the living bread”. In the words of the risen Lord, Himself, in the message to the church of Laodicea given to John (Rev. 3:14), He is clearly described as “*the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*” Jesus was then the very beginning of the creation of God, away back in the far regions of eternity.

This is pictured for us in Proverbs 8:22, where we read, as though Jesus was speaking prophetically through the writer of that book, “*The LORD (Jehovah) possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old.*” The basic meaning of the Hebrew word here translated “possessed” is “to create” and so, in His prehuman existence, before Jehovah’s works of old, in the very beginning of His creation, He (Jesus) was the Heavenly Father’s Logos or agent, by whom all else was created.

Both the apostles John and Paul were inspired to confirm this. In John 1:1-3 we read - “*In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God and the Word was a God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made.*” These words refer to the very beginning away back when the Logos Himself was brought forth, not when our planet was formed, but long before that, a time about which we are not informed in scripture.

In Col. 1:15-17, the apostle Paul supports John’s record. Speaking of our Lord, Paul says - “*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.*” Jesus was back at the Father’s right hand when Paul wrote these words, but he confirms that He was indeed the firstborn of every creature in the distant regions of eternity.

Can we visualise the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Logos, the Lord of Creation, as the Father’s honoured agent, in those far-off ages of the past, before our world was formed? Proverbs 8:30 describes the relationship between the Logos and the Father in beautifully intimate language - “*I was beside Him, like a master workman, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing before Him always.*” (R.S.V) A master workman He truly was, bringing into being the mighty planets of our Universe, which astronomers tell us we cannot even number.

But one of the most revealing things that we learn is that, away back there, God’s plan of creation was discussed with His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus, as the Logos. We know this, that the Father must have revealed His plan and found complete agreement in the mind of His Son, for we read in Rev. 13:8 (R.S.V.) that Jesus was “*the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world*” in this plan of God. How could this be, what does it imply? It indicates the complete revealing of the Father’s plans to His only-begotten Son - the creation of the various planets, including our earth, the creation of the intelligent beings of the different orders in the spirit world, and then of the creation of mankind in the perfect conditions of the Garden of Eden. All these intelligent beings would be perfect, in the image of God, in their own sphere.

But it was foreknown to God that His human creation would fall and He had determined that the sentence would be death. However, He also planned in advance the redemption of Adam and all mankind condemned

in Adam, desiring evidently that His only-begotten Son, of His own freewill, should become the Redeemer of mankind, and, by so great a sacrifice as this implied, manifest His loyalty to the Father and His faith in Him. Jesus' response is well expressed in the prophetic words of Psalm 40:6-8 - *"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened; burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required. Then said I, Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart."*

"I delight to do thy will, O my God." What a loving and grand submission to the will of the Father is here expressed; to delight in doing the Father's will to redeem the human family from death by paying their penalty in death. Here we see, first and foremost, why Jesus came down from heaven - that is, to do the Father's will, to redeem mankind from death. "Mine ears thou hast opened" - to know God's will in His program for the salvation of all mankind.

In quoting these words from the Psalmist, the apostle Paul added a further thought as we read in Hebrews 10:5 - *"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me."* Here we see the reference is to our Lord's human body. This was surely one of the miracles associated with the Logos being made flesh, taking human form so that He might pay the sacrifice for Adam and all condemned in Adam. In verse 6 we read - *"in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure."* God had no real pleasure in the sacrifices of animals, which were merely pictorial of Christ's great sacrifice.

From verse 9 we read - *"Then said I, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second."* The "first" here would be the typical or pictorial sacrifices of the animals in Israel, in which God had no real pleasure. They were taken away, rendered obsolete by the sacrifice of Christ. We recall what happened at the moment when the Lord died upon the cross - the veil of the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. Israel's temple services and animal sacrifices would no longer be acceptable by God now that the real sacrifice had come. "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second."

Returning to the phrase "a body hast thou prepared me" (v.5), we find a similar thought in John 1:14 - *"the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."* Can we fully realise the condescension of the Logos in coming down to human estate, in having His spiritual life transferred to the Babe of Bethlehem, to take on perfect human life, "a little lower than the angels", to taste death for all mankind? The so great love of Jesus in so doing was no doubt continually prompted by the thought - "I delight to do Thy will, O God."

We realise, too, that in being made flesh He sacrificed over thirty years of immediate spiritual fellowship with His Heavenly Father, whose daily delight He was, rejoicing before Him always. But Hebrews 12:2 presents, as it were, a compensating thought in respect of our Lord's supreme sacrifice. *"Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* What then was the joy set before our Lord in His endurance of the cross?

Firstly, there was the joy, the pleasure, of loving to do the Father's will. **Secondly**, there was the joy in prospect that, if faithful unto death, He would be raised to the Father's right hand. In explanation, we have the words of John 10:17,18 - *"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might receive it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself I have power to lay it down, and I have power to receive it again. This commandment have I received of my Father"*

Furthermore, the joy of returning to the Father is revealed in John 14:28, in Jesus' words to His little band of followers just prior to his crucifixion - *"Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I."* "If you loved me!" Of course, they loved the Lord in their own way, and loving Him they wished to keep Him. But there was a higher love implied here. "If you loved me, you would rejoice, **because** I go to the Father", to the glory He had with the Father before the world was. He was going back to the Father from whom He came, the Father to whom he was a daily delight. This was His request in His prayer to the Father - *"Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory I had with thee before the world was."* (John 17:5)

We know that the Father not only honoured Jesus with His former glory as the Logos, but honoured Him further, exalting Him to His own, divine nature. How beautifully this is expressed by the apostle in Phil. 2:6 - *"Who being in the form of God thought not by robbery to be equal with God."* The Authorised Version here gives a wrong thought - He did not meditate to be on an equality with God at all, that was Satan's ambition, not that of our Lord Jesus. Verse 7 continues - *"But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."* It was necessary that He be in the likeness of men, an exact equivalent of Adam, so that He might be a corresponding price to redeem mankind.

Verse 8 reads - *"And being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."* This was required for as it is written - *"cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."* The nation of Israel was doubly cursed, by their law and by death in Adam. It was required of Jesus that He pay the penalty on the cross for Israel and the whole world of mankind. Verse 9 goes on -

“wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name above every name.” How beautifully, then, the apostle shows the exaltation of Jesus because of His obedience unto death as man’s Redeemer.

Thirdly, there was set before Him, in enduring the cross, the joy of redeeming from death those who would be the members of His Bride, the Church, who would be His associates in bringing God’s favour and blessings to all the rest of mankind throughout the earth in the Kingdom. In His wonderful prayer to the Father, recorded in John 17, Jesus referred particularly to these first members of the Church. Verse 6 reads - *“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept my word.”* These were the ones who walked with Him throughout the lengths and breadths of Palestine, preaching the Kingdom, watching the Lord perform the miracles indicating the greatness of His glory in the Kingdom time.

They saw Him raise the dead, they saw Him restore Lazarus after four days in the grave. Whether it be four days, four years or four thousand years, will make no difference to the Lord when the time comes for the glorious resurrection day. These men whom God gave to Jesus saw all these things happen; no wonder that they were convinced that this was the Christ and were willing to follow Him faithfully unto death. If we are devoted to the Lord, we today have just as much evidence that He is the one to follow as did those whom God first gave Him. In His prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus prays not only for these first ones but for all who would come to believe through their word to our day - *“that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”* (Verse 23)

In 2 Cor. 8:9 we read - *“for ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.”* He who was rich, as the Logos at the Father’s right hand, left His own estate to become poor, to share mankind’s estate, so that we might be rich in the glory of the Kingdom of God. Paul further speaks of the Church, the Lord’s Bride, as *“awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous of good works.”* (Titus 2:13, 14 R.S.V.) These are to be a people of His own, His own disposition, His own spirit, His own ambition, ready to lay down their lives in sacrifice as He did, in accord with God’s good will.

For this joy of purifying for Himself a people of His own, Jesus came down from heaven and endured the cross, delighting to do the Father’s will. We have the apostle’s words also in Hebrews 2:9-11 - *“We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”* Truly, Jesus is not ashamed to call His followers brethren, for they are all children of God, with Christ as their Head. Indeed, for the joy of having His Bride with Him in glory, Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame!

Fourthly, Jesus endured the cross for the joy of redeeming all humanity from the prison house of death. In John 12:32,33 we note Jesus’ words - *“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This He said signifying by what death He should die.”* Jesus was first lifted up on the cross, then lifted up to the Father’s right hand. We might also note the words of John 3:14-17 - *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up for God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* God **so loved**, Jesus so loved, that He came down from heaven to bring life, lasting life, to a world of sinners lost and ruined by the fall.

In the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of Christ’s suffering and death and in verse 11, we read - *“He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.”* When Christ as the second Adam, with His Bride as the second Eve, have brought life to all mankind, and everyone has had a full opportunity to gain lasting life in a restored earthly paradise, He shall be satisfied indeed. For this joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross so that He might give life to every human being who has ever lived. This will require a resurrection of all in the graves and John 5:28,29 assures us that this has been provided for in God’s all-comprehensive Plan.

The prophet Isaiah reveals further what the wonderful sacrifice of Christ will accomplish on behalf of all mankind when Christ’s Kingdom is set up and the knowledge and glory of the Lord are covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. In Isa. 52:10 we read - *“The LORD (Jehovah) hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations.”* This refers to the risen Christ, the very One who came down to earth, the very One who has been exalted to the Father’s right hand. Verse 10 concludes - *“and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”* Some of the grand blessings of that time are described very beautifully by the same prophet in Isa. 25:6-9 - blessings of life, health and victory.

But “Why Jesus Came Down From Heaven” has also a very personal application, for He did so for **each one of us individually**, in order that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. (See John 10:10) The

words of 2 Cor 5:14,15 surely speak to our hearts. Paul there says - *“For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them, and rose again.”* What a lovely and challenging thought to keep before us each day of our Christian life. “The love of Christ constrains us” in the privilege of His service, so that we may be able, for the joy before us, to endure something of the hardness of the Christian way in the footsteps of the Master who has done so much for us.

It is surely no wonder that in the fullness of the kingdom times of blessing, the Hallelujah Chorus of Rev. 5:11-13 will sound forth from all God’s intelligent creatures, to His praise, throughout the entire universe. *“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power; and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour; and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour; and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”*

Jesus came down from heaven, delighting to do His Father’s will, and, having proved faithful unto death, be raised to the Father’s right hand of glory. He came down from heaven, delighting to have a chosen band of followers who would walk in His steps of self-sacrifice, and be raised to reign with Him in His Kingdom. For these, He endured the cross. But He also endured the cross for the whole human family, in order that they might be brought back to God and, as many as are willing then to obey His laws, live in the restored Garden of Eden conditions then worldwide.

Truly we can rejoice and praise God that Jesus Christ was willing to come down from heaven, to humble Himself, to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, so that He might pay the ransom sacrifice for us all, not only those now living, but for all who have ever lived from the days of Adam until now. Praise God for His glorious Plan of redemption. Amen. (The Voice)

HITHERTO HENCEFORTH

Hitherto the Lord hath blessed us,

Guiding all the way.

Henceforth let us trust Him fully,

Trust Him all the day.

Hitherto the Lord hath loved us.

Caring for His own.

Henceforth let us love Him better,

Live for Him alone.

Hitherto the Lord hath blessed us,

Crowning all our days.

Henceforth let us live to bless Him,

Live to show His praise.

(F R Havergal)

“HE FAILETH NOT”

Each happy morn when I awake,

This promise for the day I take,

“I’ll never leave thee, nor forsake”

He faileth not!

And when I reach that golden shore,

My trouble and my labour o’er,

I’ll sing this song for evermore,

He FAILED me not!

The Christian Pathway

(Contributed)

“Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Pet. 4:19)

General teachings of our day largely omit mention of suffering as regards Christian faith and practice. But because the Bible in a number of places tells us to “rejoice in the Lord,” and “sing praise unto His name,” etc., it does not follow that no suffering is entailed. On the contrary we read that “All who will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” This has been fulfilled in the past, and so it must continue until the great millennial dawning, when Christ shall take unto Himself His great power to reign.

It would seem that the reason why so little is heard now of suffering and persecution, is that there are so few who are living “godly lives in Christ Jesus.” There appear to be rather large numbers of professing Christians who have not to contend with any persecution or suffering in their so-called Christian walk. All such, if they are honest, would be compelled to admit that the reason is that their godly life is only profession, and that their real attitude is “Be at one with the world,” instead of “Coming out and being separate.” Probably they realise quite well that it is the coming out and being separate that brings the persecution.

Therefore, when we seek for truth in Scriptural teaching, it is most important that we distinguish sharply between nominal Christianity (in name only) and truly consecrated Christians; because those who are nominal only often teach doctrines and live lives that give an altogether wrong impression of Christianity and real discipleship. One longs to expose these errors, not for the sake of sitting in judgment upon any, but in order to warn and help those who desire to be true, and who are in danger of being led into the confusion which falsity produces.

The first happening in a Christian’s life is conviction of Sin. When one becomes convicted of sin, that is, realises and is ready to admit that the life he or she has been living estranges them from God, then the Gospel message to such is “Repent and believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that ye might be saved and your sins might be blotted out.” Christ died upon the Cross for all people. All have at one time been unsaved sinners, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There has not been one exception, except of course, our Lord, Christ Jesus. And He, the one exception, the sinless, perfect man, died upon the cross, “The just for the unjust,” that He might reconcile us again to God. His life offered up at Calvary blots out the sin, and all who gain such understanding and gladly accept the salvation offered find peace with God.

Now, all who have gone that far, find cause for true rejoicing. It is a happy day for the one who can be brought to see that Christ was the propitiation for his or her sin, as it was indeed for the sins of the whole world. The dictionary rendering of propitiation is “act of appeasing,” or “atonement.” Sin produces enmity with God, but the Christian’s sins are appeased or atoned for by the shed blood of Jesus at Calvary. They are blotted out; the enmity is thus destroyed and we are at peace with God. Having come to that point, we are justified by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Too often the preaching of God’s Word stops at this point. Most certainly we must have a good understanding of all this first; but it is far from all; indeed, it is only the beginning. Now begins the real Christian life and the test as to just how much we appreciate God’s love for us. Now is presented unto us the opportunity of presenting our bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which the Apostle Paul says is our reasonable or proper service. Our life is no longer our own; it has been bought with a price. It must be laid down now, consecrated to the Master’s service and the call is to infinitely higher things than we have been concerned with hitherto. Old things pass away: all becomes new. As we hear the call of God to seek “the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus,” our chief hopes and ambitions become spiritual, heavenly, instead of carnal, worldly.

We are specially exhorted to make our calling and election sure, being reminded that not all the called are finally elected or chosen, but only those who are diligent in obeying, and remain faithful unto death. Many are called but few are chosen and given the prize of the high calling. We cannot say that there is not a lesser prize to be given to many, but now the way of the high calling is the special call and we stand as it were at the crossroads. Now assuredly is the time to stop and count the cost of setting our hand to the plough and not looking back.

Many esteem the cost too great even to heed the call. They may hear it, but instantly suppress it, giving it little consideration. Others hear and heed and begin to tread the narrow way, but when persecution arises because of the Word, they halt. Some turn quickly back: others halt so long, that often the call loses its clearness and almost without realising it, their steps are retraced back to the broad way of the world. But for those who go on in the face of all, having set their hand to the plough, determined by the grace of God never to look back, to these are the comforting words of our text applied.

History shows us what dreadful torture and persecution many of Christ’s disciples have had to endure for a witness to the truth, especially in the days of the power of Rome. Countless numbers were burned at the stake, others were thrown into a playground to be mauled by wild beasts, their dying agonies making entertainment

for thousands who gathered to watch and gloat over the victims because they would not bow the knee to the regime of a church which professed to be “The Church of God,” but which we now recognise as a part of the great system of Anti-Christ.

We can be thankful to God that we have not in our day to face the same physical torture in adherence to our faith. But persecution has not, ceased. He who will be true to the Word of God will still face persecution in some measure. The true Christian, as of yore, must be still a stranger and pilgrim upon earth. Here below he has no abiding city (the treasures of his heart are not earthly things) but he seeks one to come. The so-called joys and pleasures of this world mean nothing to him (though prior to the call he may have been interested in them to some extent).

As his spiritual sight increases, he is able so to visualise heavenly things that those of the world begin to term him peculiar, just as they did with Paul when they cried, “Thou art mad, much learning hath made thee mad,” or as we have it in 1 Peter 4:4. “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:’ As the worldly find the truly consecrated running not to the same excess of riot as themselves, they begin to separate him from their company, speaking evil of him; taunting him as being old-fashioned, or narrow-minded, or a self-righteous hypocrite or something similar. But what say the scriptures, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake, for great is your reward in Heaven” (Matt. 5:11).

Of the multitudes who have come to some understanding of justification by faith in the shed blood of Jesus, quite a few appear to make the mistake of seeking to find all the blessing of such salvation in this life. They enter very largely into all the world’s pursuits, interpreting the message of salvation in the nature of licence to better enjoy the worlding’s pleasure. To know Christ means much to us here below but “If in this life only we have hope in Christ we are of all men most pitiable.” Thank God our chief ‘hope is centred in that “to come.” To follow Christ truly now, will probably bring many more persecutions, heartaches and sufferings than warm handclasps and expressions of good cheer. But our trust is not to be in men but “hope thou in God.” Just as Peter, one of our Lord’s closest followers would have hindered our Lord from the path of duty (Matthew 16:21-23), so often our well-meaning friends would hinder us from our full consecration and we must be ever on guard against the easy world conformity, the seeking to serve both God and Mammon, the impossible.

We are not, however, to suffer as evil doers and count it Christian suffering. Many times impulsively we do or say things which we ought not, and afterwards besides feeling sorry or repentant, we may have to suffer as a consequence of our action. Under such circumstances we can but admit our fault and seek to make the best of it, praying God so to guide and counsel that we might be more thoughtful in future. On such occasions we should guard against hardening our hearts, and refrain from attaching any blame to God for allowing something that was entirely our own fault. We can learn along this line from 1 Peter 2:20. “For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently, but if when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God:’

So, we learn from this Epistle of Peter, that to follow our Lord fully, as He commanded when he said, “He that would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me,” presents no easy road whilst we dwell or tabernacle in the flesh. It is a way in which, without doubt, we will encounter the opposition of the world, the flesh, and the devil and to such an extent that it will entail suffering for righteousness sake. It is impossible to enumerate all the ways in which that suffering might come, for the various circumstances of Christ’s followers give rise to differing experiences; but when we humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, casting all our care upon Him, through Jesus, remembering that He will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able to bear, we can rest assured that He will work all things together for our ultimate good.

“Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit their lives unto him in doing good, as unto a faithful Creator.”

From Glory to Glory

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Cor 3:18

A full transformation into a likeness of character to our Heavenly Father should be the constant effort of every true child of God. It is not enough that we gain a knowledge of His plan and a pleasurable realisation of His mercy and grace towards our unworthy race, but that we joyfully tell the good news to others; it is not enough that we exert ourselves with uncommon zeal to bless others with those good tidings of great joy for all people; for we may do all these things and more, and yet, if we do not let our Heavenly Father’s goodness and grace have its due effect upon our own hearts, our knowledge, and even our good works, will profit us little.

Our main object, therefore, in studying God's Word and His character, as therein revealed, should always be to bring our own hearts and minds into closer sympathy and likeness and co-operation with His. The apostle says (1 Thess. 4:3) - "*This is the will of God, even your sanctification.*" - our full setting apart, or consecration of mind and heart entirely to the Lord, that He may complete the good work of transforming us into His glorious likeness, by the operation of His Spirit through His Word, and thus fit us for the enjoyment of His abounding grace in the ages to come.

In the words of the apostle in our text, we notice particularly that the statement is made of *all* the church - *we all* are being changed from glory to glory. The inference is consequently a strong one, that those who are not being so changed are not of the class addressed. This is a solemn thought, and one that claims the most careful consideration of all the consecrated. The question with us is not - Have we made a full consecration of ourselves to the Lord? -but, having made such consecration, are we, in accordance with that consecration, fully submitting ourselves to the transforming influences of the Spirit of God, to be changed daily more and more fully to the glorious likeness of our God?

Like the apostle, then, addressing all the consecrated and faithful, we also today may say - we are all being changed from glory to glory under the moulding, fashioning influences of the Spirit of God. We can see it in each other, thank God! and we glory in it. Yesterday the mallet of divine providence struck a blow upon that member of the Body of Christ, and an unsightly pride fell off; he or she looks so much more beautiful today, because they did not resist the blow, but gracefully submitted to it. The day before, we saw another under the wearing, painful, polishing process, to which he or she patiently submitted, and oh, how they shine today! From day to day we see each other studiously contemplating the divine pattern and striving to copy it; and how we note the softening, refining and beautifying effect upon all such! So the Spirit of God is at work upon all who fully submit themselves to His will.

But while the mallet and chisel and the polishing sand of divine providence do a very necessary part of the transforming work, by relieving us of many of the old and stubborn infirmities of the flesh, which cannot be so fully eradicated by the gentler influences of the Spirit, the apostle points us to the specially appointed means for our transformation in the careful and constant contemplation of the glory of God as revealed in His Word, and also in His blessed Ambassador, Jesus Christ, saying - "*We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.*"

"With open face" would signify without any intervening veil of prejudice or fear or superstition, but with simplicity of heart and mind. So we behold the glory (the glorious character) of the Lord - not with actual vision, but as in a glass, as reflected in His Word and as exemplified in His living Word, Jesus Christ. To aid us in this study we are promised the blessed influences of the Spirit of the Lord, to guide us into all truth and show us things to come.

As we look into this mirror, what a glorious vision we have of the divine justice, which we promptly recognise as the very foundation of God's throne (Psa. 97:2), as well as the foundation of all our present and future security. If we could not recognise the justice of God, we could have no assurance that His gracious promises would ever be fulfilled; for we could say - Perhaps He will change His mind. On the contrary, we can say - He changeth not, and whatsoever He saith shall surely come to pass. See with what inflexible justice the sentence upon our sinful race has been executed! Generation after generation, for over sixty centuries, has witnessed it; and no power in heaven or earth could revoke that sentence until the claims of justice had been fully met by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Herein we read not only our rightful condemnation as a race of sinners, but also our final, complete and glorious deliverance, because "*God is just to forgive us our sins*" (1 John 1:9), since the precious blood of Christ redeemed us from the curse of death.

While we thus read justice in the character of God, and mark with what scrupulous care He regards and respects this principle in all His dealings with His creatures, we see how He would have us respect the same principle in all our dealings. Thus we are lead to consider what is the exact line of justice in this and that and the other transaction; and to remember also that this must be the underlying principle in all our conduct; or, in other words, that we must be just before we can be generous. This principle should, therefore, be very marked in the character of every Christian.

Next we mark the love and mercy of God. The death sentence upon our fallen race was a most merciful sentence. It was equivalent to saying - "See, I have of my own free favour granted you life and all its blessings to be enjoyed forever on condition of its proper use; but now, since you have abused my favour, I take it away and you shall return to the dust whence you came. True, in the process of dying and of bringing forth a dying race to share the penalty, the mercy of God is not so manifest to the unthinking; but those who see the plan of God discover in all this, not the decree of a merciless tyrant, but a merciful wisdom, only faintly disclosed in the promise that the seed of the woman shall in due time crush evil effectually -bruise the serpent's head - and deliver the entire race once generated in sin, by afterward regenerating all who will to life and its blessed privileges. In this mercy, in all its multiplied forms, we see the verification of the statement that "*God is*

love.” Thus we learn to be loving and merciful and kind both to the thankful and also to the unthankful.

We mark also our Heavenly Father’s bountiful providence and His tender care for all His creatures, for even the sparrows are clothed and fed, and the lilies are arrayed in glory. Here we learn precious lessons of divine benevolence and grace. Thus, through all the catalogue of moral and intellectual graces which go to make up a glorious character, we see in the mirror of the divine Word the model for our imitation; and in contemplation of all that is lovely, as embodied in Him, and of all that is pure and holy and beautiful, we are changed little by little in the course of years to the same blessed likeness - from glory to glory.

So be it; let the good work go on until every grace adorns the spotless robe of our imputed righteousness, received by faith in the blessed Son of God, whose earthly life was a perfect illustration of the Father’s character, so that He could say - *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”* Let us, therefore, mark well the love of Christ, the gentleness, the patience, the faithfulness, the zeal, the personal integrity and the self-sacrificing spirit. Mark well, then imitate His example and shine in His likeness.

The apostle adds (2 Cor. 4:7) that the fact that we thus hold this treasure of a transformed mind in these defective vessels proves the excellency of the power of God, and not of us. So, by constant yielding to the influences of the Spirit of God, we may show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 Peter 2:9) Oh, let our efforts and prayers continually be that these poor earthen vessels may more and more show forth the praises of our God! Let them be clean in body and mind; let no evil communications proceed out of the mouth; and let no actions unworthy of the children of God dishonour these living temples of the Holy Spirit.

Mountains of the Bible

“And He went as He was wont to the Mount of Olives.” (Luke 22;39)

Mountains are Nature’s monuments, Like islands they dwell apart, and like them they give asylum from a noisy and irreverent world. In their silence many a meditative spirit has found leisure for the longest thought, and in their Patmoslike seclusion the brightest visions and largest projects have evolved; whilst by a sort of over-mastering attraction they have usually drawn to themselves the most memorable incidents which variegate our human history.

As they are the natural haunts of the highest spirits, and the appropriate scenes of the most signal occurrences, so they are the noblest cenotaphs. Far off they arrest the eye; and though their hoary chronicle tells its legend of the past, their heaven-pointing elevations convey the spirit onward towards eternity.

We do not wonder that excited fancy has sought relics of the Ark on the top of Ararat; and in the grim solitude of Sinai, it is solemn to remember and easy to believe that the voice of God has spoken here. Elijah has made Carmel all his own and the death of Moses must be ever Pisgah’s diadem. The words of Jesus seem still to linger on the hills of Galilee, their lilies forbidding “thought for raiment”, and their little birds twittering “no thought for tomorrow”, whilst every grassy tuft and scented flower is breathing its own beatitude.

But though heavenly wisdom spoke on that mountainside, and excellent glory lighted on the top of Tabor, there is another height to which discipleship reverts with fonder memory, and which it treads with softer step - that mountain where beyond any place in Palestine “God was manifest in flesh” - where the great Intercessor was wont to pray, where Jesus wept over Jerusalem, on whose slopes He blessed the apostle band, and sent His message of mercy to mankind - the mountain at whose base lay Bethany and Gethsemane - on whose gentle turf His feet last stood - the Sabbatic, pensive and expectant Mount of Olives.