



Volume 75 No.6 MELBOURNE, NOV./DEC., 1992

The Mystery Of His Will

(A study of God's Plan in Ephesians 1)

(Contributed Article)

The Church at Ephesus was established by Paul 1 and his associates, as we have it recorded in Acts 19. It was established on Paul's second missionary journey, and then "God gave the increase". It progressed well — so much so that Paul saw good to write this very spiritual epistle to them. Yet, later on, as is seen in the message to this Church in Rev. 2:1, sadly, the progress was not maintained as it should have been, and this fact brought reproof from the One who walketh among the candlesticks.

This fact constitutes a warning to us that it is not sufficient that we run well for a while, but as runners in a foot-race today cannot win if the effort is not maintained, so with us, the effort must be maintained for the full length of the way if we are to win in the end.

After the usual greetings, the Apostle in verse 3 ascribes praise and honour to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — or as one translation has it, Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has given us these spiritual blessings. "Spiritual" means non-carnal, that is not of fleshly or earthly kind. These spiritual blessings are only for the regenerate, for those begotten of the holy spirit of God; "the natural man understands not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned" — 1 Cor. 2:14.

The word "heavenly" means literally "above the sky", therefore refers to the celestial places, but the word is used figuratively here, not literally. "Heavenly places" are used to refer to what has been revealed to His people by the holy spirit and illustrated in the type — namely, in the Holy and the Most Holy of the Tabernacle.

At the present time, that is during this Gospel Age, the saints are depicted as in the Holy of the Tabernacle, eating of the shewbread — the word of God — and enjoying the light from the candlestick, which represents the light of the holy spirit illuminating the word of God, the shewbread. Thus they have meat (food) to eat the world knows not of. The incense of the golden Altar is for their benefit also, this incense representing the perfect sacrifice of Jesus; this incense of His making the sacrifice of his body members acceptable. Rev. 8:3, 4 says much incense is offered for, or with, the prayers (and sacrifices) of the saints, so that they should be acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

We note that some are made to sit together in heavenly places (or as the Diaglott says, "heavenlies"), *plural* in both instances, so the reference could be to that which was typified by the Holy and Most Holy places of the Tabernacle, the Holy being a type of the condition we enjoy now of being spirit-begotten sons of God, and the Most Holy representing our condition when born of the spirit, glorified together with our Head, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." That is the hope we have in view, and we hold it prospectively but with strong faith in Him who has promised it.

In verse 4, "We were chosen in him before the foundation of the world." God's plan was made *before* this time; He determined to have a spiritual class of the divine nature to be the bride of Christ, a new creation, *before* the foundation of the world. God did not devise His plan as he went along, that is as each contingency occurred. Even with His Son, it is written, that He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world", and He planned for

the Body of Christ that they should be holy and without blame before Him. While it is probable that the reference here is to the time when the Church is glorified and with her Lord and standing before Him (“before” meaning directly in front of Him), yet there is a way by which his saints can be blameless before him now, in the sense in which Zacharias and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, were blameless in keeping the commandments of the Law — not faultlessly, but blamelessly when the imperfections of the flesh were taken into account.

Verse 5: Verse 4 ends “holy and without blame before him”. The words “in love” seem to belong to verse 5 (not to v. 4) as in the Diaglott — “Having *in love* previously marked *us* out for sonship through Christ Jesus for Himself according to the good pleasure of His (God’s) will.” The *Father’s* love is manifested by His love and mercy in making His plan this way; the *Son’s* love is manifest in giving His life for His bride. This meant great sacrifice on the part of both Father and Son. The Father gave His son, the dearest treasure of His heart; the Son gave all that He had, His life, for His bride.

The bride was a predestinated *class*, and the word means to limit in advance, to predetermine. The church, the bride, was a predetermined class, and Rev. 7:4 says the *number* was predetermined as 144,000. But they were not predetermined as individuals — they were a part of God’s plan *before* the foundation of the world.

The members were to have the spirit of sonship (the Diaglott translation of the verse) — a begetting of the holy spirit from the Father received at their consecration. However, this is only a begetting; we must live up to the terms of our consecration vow if we would be full sons and eventually be born on the spirit plane of being. We must pass the tests the Heavenly Father sends. Even our Lord Jesus had to be tested. “Though he were a Son (begotten at baptism) yet learned He obedience by the things He suffered.” He passed successfully every test the Father permitted, and later received glory and honour and immortality, the divine nature, as a reward. The saints also have this hope of the divine nature through faith in the merit of the sacrifice of God’s Son, Jesus.

So, as verse 6 says (Diaglott) — through the love of God “we have been graciously favoured in the beloved one.” We deeply appreciate God’s mercy and favour towards us, and yet in time to come after receiving the reward we will appreciate more fully His goodness when we are richly endowed with all the good things the Father has promised to them that love Him. But even now we rejoice in the sunshine of His grace. We have redemption through Christ’s blood, such deliverance from sin and Adamic condemnation being only for the Church now, but for all the faithful of mankind in the Millennial Age.

Passing on, verse 8 says that God caused the riches of his grace to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence. “Abound” means to superabound, to be in excess, so we have the thought of good measure, pressed down, flowing over. Instead of “abound”, the Weymouth translation uses “lavished”. Reading verses 7, 8 and part of 9; “It is in Him and through the shedding of His blood that we have our deliverance, the forgiveness of our offence, so abundant was God’s grace, which He, the possessor of all wisdom and understanding, lavished upon us, when He made known to us the secret of His will.”

So God’s grace “has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” — prudence meaning mental action or activity, that is intellectual or moral insight. God, then, acted toward us in all wisdom in giving us such a good hope through grace, and also God, in thinking of a bride for His Son to live and reign with Him in the heavens, did so with all intellectual and moral insight and foresight. He acted not lightly, but with careful deliberation, because this class were to be given the reward of immortality.

Verse 9: “Having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself.” It gave God pleasure to do this, it gave Him satisfaction or delight as the word “pleasure” means. The word “mystery” means a secret-something known only to the initiated. And who are the initiated? We answer, those who have come into Christ by vowing to live as He did. It is to these only, the truly faithful, that the great hope of reigning with Christ as His joint-heirs is promised. They belong to a special class by consecration and the receiving of God’s holy spirit; we could say they belong to an exclusive order, a humble position now, but in time to come, glorious; but above all, useful. (2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

1 Pet. 1:8-12 speaks of this *so great salvation* being placed before the Church, such a salvation that holy men of old and even the angels searched the Scriptures for information concerning this so great salvation (Heb. 2:3). Then Col. 1:26,27 speaks of this same thing — “the secret which had been hid from ages and generations but is, now made manifest to the saints. To whom God would make known what is the fellowship of this secret (secret order) among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

So this so great salvation was the secret, and those called to it are to be a new creation, a new group or company in the heavens, possessing the divine nature and working for the uplift and blessing of all people under the headship of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Millennial Age. The Old Testament writers could not see or

understand some of the things they spoke of prophetically. No doubt Abraham wondered what the full significance of the promise to him meant when God said, In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. In Hebrews 11:13, it says that, like others who lived before Christ, Abraham could not see clearly the fulfilment — he saw the fulfilment of the promise afar off, that is indistinctly.

The Apostle Paul was an instrument in God's hand in revealing the deep and hidden truths of God's word, and he deeply appreciated this favour as we see from the exultant way he has written here in Ephesians. Also in Rom. 16:25-26, he speaks of his privilege of "the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations (or people, Jews and Gentiles) for the obedience of faith."

Here Eph. 3:9-12 from Weymouth is good. This is "the stewardship of the truth which from all the ages lay concealed in order that the church might now be used (i.e. in time to come) to display to the powers and authorities in the heavenly realms the innumerable aspects of God's wisdom. Such was *the eternal purpose* which He had formed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have this bold and confident access through faith in Him."

Verse 10: "In the dispensation of the fulness of times" — Here first of all we should note the basic meaning of "dispensation", which is "an administration of a household or estate, especially of a religious economy". It is God who has this administration to fulfil all His plans on time, that is at the fullness or completion of the time allotted for each feature of His plan. This word "dispensation", meaning "administration", when used as a verb means stewardship; so God has this stewardship, and He is a good and perfect steward of His economy. *Times* in this verse means set or proper times, as also in Gal. 4:4. "In the fullness of time God sent forth His son", and in the fullness of time God will gather all things together under Christ.

In verse 10, we are told that it is God's purpose to reunite all things under one head, even under the Anointed One (Diag.). Weymouth's translation says, "And this is in harmony with God's merciful purpose for the governments of the world when the times are ripe for it — the purpose which he has cherished in His own mind of restoring the whole creation to find its one Head in Christ; yes, things in heaven and things in earth, to find their one Head in Him."

We note that it is "all things in heaven and earth" that are to find their one head in Christ, and we find through the Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:12,13) that the present heavens or ecclesiastical powers are to be removed and a new heavens, Christ and the saints, are to be the new spiritual ruling powers. These shall teach mankind through the Old Testament saints, these forming the new power or authority on earth, and thus a new earth or society shall take the place of the old in this universe. Also, those spirit beings who are at present out of harmony with God will have to repent and serve God again, or be destroyed. (1 Pet. 3:17-20). So we see that restoring the whole universe to find its one Head in Christ will not be fully accomplished until the end of the Millennial Age, when Satan, and all the evil angels who do not reform, as well as the disobedient of mankind, will be destroyed in the second death.

Verse 11: In verse 10 the Apostle has spoken of all things being gathered together in Christ, and now in this verse he says that we share in this wonderful heritage of reuniting all things under Christ, having been chosen beforehand in accordance with the intention of Him whose might carries out in everything the counsel of His *own* will (Weymouth). God has no need to consult with others about His plans.

Verse 12: Those who have first trusted in Christ are the called and faithful of this Gospel Age. We could perhaps think of the Apostles as being special and worthy of additional praise, and certain individuals in the Church since, but it seems Paul had in mind the whole anointed company made up of members from both Jews and Gentiles. In speaking of those who first trusted in Christ, there is the inference that some will trust later, and so we are led to think of redemption for the world in the Millennial Age. The Church, the bride, are, as we have seen, a predestinated class, predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will, and it is to *these* God has given this prior hope that we should come into Christ, be incorporate in Christ.

This is to be a great honour to those who attain to such a position and condition of glory, honour and immortality. It is indeed! but what else is said here — that we should be to the *praise* of *his* glory. Let us note Weymouth's translation — "that we should be devoted to the extolling of his glorious attributes — we who were the first to fix our hopes in Christ." That rendering conveys a good thought — that we should be ever grateful for the love and benevolence of God who, through favour, grace — amazing grace, will grant us so high a favour or blessing, exalting the bride to be forever with Him in the heavens.

In verse 13 the word "sealed" should be noted; it means to stamp for security, or preservation, to keep secret. This seal is the holy spirit, and it is God who grants us the holy spirit; it is a secret sealing, unknown to the

worldly; it is for our preservation as new creatures. In the Diaglott it is called the spirit of the *promise*, as it came by promise of Jesus, who called it the comforter (John 16:7). Also it was promised in the Old Testament, in Joel 2:28-32, which was quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17 when he spoke of the initial giving of the spirit at that time.

In addition to the holy spirit being called a seal, in verse 14 it is called the earnest of our inheritance. The word “earnest” means a pledge or down payment, that is a payment in advance of the blessing to come to us when born of the spirit. It ensures our share in the inheritance of the saints with Christ Jesus our Head so long as we are faithful to our covenant of laying down our lives in God’s service as Jesus did — until the redemption (the ransom in full) of the purchased possession, i.e. the whole anointed company, the church, into the glory and honour promised as joint-heirs of Christ. In Heb. 9:15 the eternal inheritance is also mentioned, and Col. 3:23,24 adds — “whatsoever ye do (particularly service to the Lord) do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ.”

Verse 14 ends with the phrase, “to the praise of His glory”, as does verse 12, and there we quoted Weymouth’s translation, “that we should be devoted to the extolling of God’s glorious attributes”. It could be added that that is a *present* as well as a future privilege. The motivating force which inspires this is that our God is a God of love, and therefore not selfish — love seeketh not her own. Long ago God was alone, and He wished to have company, and first of all He created his Son, the firstborn of all creation, but He did not create Him of, or in the form of His own immortal nature, for He had a plan for Him and would *later* grant Him the divine nature. But God wanted to have more than one with the immortal nature, He wanted to have a number, a family of his own nature, and in Revelation 7:4 it says 144,000 as noted before.

His Son was to be given the divine nature if He was willing to give his life in sacrifice for mankind in His Father’s plan. So as God knew mankind would fall into sin, the Father planned that His Son should die as a ransom for them, “ransom” meaning a price to correspond. (An angel could not have died as a ransom, because of a different and higher nature, and not of equal value.) Then God, by selecting others from amongst mankind to be exalted to live with Him, Christ Jesus, was able to display more fully His great traits of character, His love, His condescension. His magnanimity by stooping to call some of fallen mankind. In this way, God could display the grandeur of His character most effectively to the rest of mankind and also to the fallen angels, who could be moved to repentance by such an example. Thus in the ages to come the love of God will be the theme of the saints in glory and this theme, this great truth, the love of God manifest in his redeeming grace for *all* mankind who will be obedient, will inspire rejoicing and thankfulness in every redeemed heart in ages to come.

In verse 15, the Apostle Paul begins a prayer of thanks to God for this church. He prayed in a similar way on several occasions when writing to the churches he had been instrumental in establishing. To the church at Philippi he wrote, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine making request with joy, and that He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it unto the day of Christ.” (Phil. 1:3-6). Yes, this great apostle felt the care of *all* the churches, and thanked God for them.

Verse 15 in the Diaglott reads, “On this account, I having heard of your faith” etc. This expression shows a connection with the previous verses, a reference to the magnitude of the reward, the inheritance set before the faithful followers of Christ, a reward due to all the faithful and elect when their course is fully run.

The Apostle in his prayer was desirous that the Ephesian church, having some knowledge of the great hope for the church, should continue to progress, and this prayer applies to us as well. While giving thanks to God for those at Ephesus who had heard the word so readily, and since hearing it had progressed so well, he desired earnestly that they should continue to progress in “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in (of) the knowledge of God.” Revelation means disclosure, and the Apostle desired that the disclosure or understanding of the deep truths of God’s word should be revealed to them more and more. (*This is the thought* in verses 15, 16 and 17.) Therefore, he says, on this account, or in view of the rich inheritance promised to the saints, they should be earnest in their endeavours to prove worthy and grow in grace and knowledge of God as each day goes by.

We must have the *wisdom* spoken of here, “the spirit of wisdom and revelation”. These things would not be given miraculously, but would need to be developed, and this would come only by the study of God’s Word and the indwelling of the holy spirit. We should not be content with the elementary things, with the milk of the Word, but seek the strong meat that we may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2). Col. 1:9 (Diaglott) is in harmony — Paul prayed for the Colossians, according to the Diaglott, “We do not cease praying on your behalf, that ye may be filled as to the exact knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”

Verse 18, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know (that is with all its value) what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.” The Diaglott says,

“among the saints”. (see later comment).

Verses 19 and 20 continue according to the Diaglott translation, “And what the surpassing greatness of His power towards us who believe, according to the energy of His mighty strength which He exerted in the Anointed One, having raised Him from the dead, and having seated Him at His own right hand in the heavens” — such power being readily available to all His saints now to aid them in making their calling and election sure. Let us always realise this, and avail ourselves of that power, living as we are in the hour of temptation at the very end of this Gospel Age.

Verse 21: So our Saviour, God’s beloved son in whom he was well pleased, was greatly exalted by his Father; “He exalted him above all angels and archangels of every rank and above every name that can be named, whether in this present age or in the ages to come” (T.C.N.T.) Christ Jesus has become the high priest of good things to come, and we cannot visualise all the blessings He will bring either to His body members or to the world of mankind, but as verses 22 and 23 say, God has put all under His feet in His plan for Him, and has “constituted Him a head over all things for that congregation” which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” The words “fullness” and “filleth” are closely related words. Fullness meaning repletion or completion, and filleth meaning to make replete or complete. The Christ complete, the composite Christ — mediator, priest and king — will meet these requirements, for when the Christ head and body is complete, this feature of God’s plan will be replete, i.e. completely filled — the mystery or secret purpose of God will be finished — consummated. Will this not be the crowning feature of God’s eternal purpose? Is this not what God has desired to have, a new creation, to be joint-heirs with His Son and of the same divine nature?

So we may think of God as a father and head of a family, a great king dwelling contentedly with a retinue of helpers gladly and willingly carrying out his purpose for the blessing of all mankind. The Diaglott translation of verse 18 supports this view, where it says “God’s inheritance *among* the saints”. This is what God has desired, a blessing and pleasure and an inheritance reserved for Himself. Psalm 132:13,14 tells of this, “For the Lord hath chosen Zion (the church), He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.”

Verses 15 -18 of that Psalm go on to speak of the blessings to be dispensed to the world in the Millennial Age. “I will satisfy her poor with bread, I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. There I will make the horn (power) of David (the Christ, the antitypical David) to bud. I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed (a lamp of light and truth). His enemies I will clothe with shame (they will look to him whom they pierced, Zech. 12:10) but upon him (Christ) the crown shall shed its lustre” (R.S.V.). And rightly so, as He is the one who in the Father’s plan made these blessings possible to the church and all mankind.

So we praise God from our hearts for the unspeakable gift of His beloved Son, sent forth to be a ransom for all, this truth to be called to the attention of all in God’s due time. (WJH: 1992)

The First 75 Years

This issue completes 75 years of publication 1 of “Peoples Paper — and Herald of Christ’s Kingdom”. When the first issue came out in 1918, those responsible could hardly have envisaged such a milestone being reached but in the Lord’s providence this ministry has continued until now.

Over the years, the People’s Paper has been a means of contact and blessing to Christian brethren and friends in Australia and overseas, with reports of convention and other addresses, articles on doctrinal and devotional topics, personal reports, etc. and for this, thankful praise is given to our gracious Heavenly Father, who has provided at all times, through His people, for the maintenance of this and the other activities of the Berean Bible Institute.

Though there were evidently two earlier issues, the starting point for the present Peoples Paper seems to have been the issue dated June 1918, numbered Vol. 1, No. 1. All subsequent issues are numbered from this one, which outlined the background to the establishment in that year of what is now the Berean Bible Institute. The Mission of Peoples Paper, as stated in the June 1918 issue, is reprinted hereunder.

For the present, it seems to be the Lord’s will that the publication of Peoples Paper should be continued, and the prayers of the Lord’s people are sought for His guidance and His blessing of this ministry, realising that “unless the Lord build the house, they labour in vain who build.”

Mission of Peoples Paper (from Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1918)

The mission of “Peoples Paper” will be to be a comfort and encouragement to the people of God and to proclaim the glad tidings of the coming Kingdom of Christ to all people. The intention will be to “speak the truth in

love”, so that even where difference of thought with others may be expressed, it will seek not to offend, but to reason along scriptural lines with hope of attaining unity in the faith once delivered to the Saints.

Unto You Is Born a Saviour

Once more we are coming to that season of V the year when, with many around the world, our hearts especially turn again to the birth of our dear Saviour as the Babe of Bethlehem.

How beautifully that careful researcher, Luke, has recorded for us the events leading up to and including that time. In his gospel account, we read of Zacharias and Elizabeth, “righteous before God”, to whom was to be born John, the “prophet of the Highest” and the herald of our Saviour. Here we learn of the wondrous announcement of the angel to Mary, the one “highly favoured of the Lord”, and listen to her heartfelt song of praise to God.

“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary, for thou has found favour with God, and behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” Luke 1:30-32.

Following Jesus’ birth, Luke invites us out into the fields and with the shepherds we hear again that wondrous message: “Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ‘ Luke 2:10,11. What a message! Announced to a few simple shepherds but of import and ultimate blessing to all mankind.

Later, Luke takes us with Mary and Joseph and the newborn child up to the temple with their simple offering and we hear the gracious and prophetic words of the aged Simeon: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” Luke 2:30-32. Here too we meet Anna, prayerful, dutiful prophetess and listen to her speak of Jesus and redemption in Jerusalem.

In such circumstances, our dear Saviour came into our world. While we need must look forward and realise the purpose of his coming as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and recall all that it entailed in suffering before final victory, yet for a while, with Luke and with Matthew also, may we reflect again on the lovely story of our Saviour’s birth, and be thankful to God for His unspeakable Gift.

Christlikeness - The Evidence of Sonship

“He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked “ — 1 John 2:6

To abide in Christ implies that one has first come into him. This gives us the thought of a body. The Scriptures everywhere represent the church as being this body, with Jesus as the Head. “God gave him to be Head over the church, which is his body.” During the Gospel age an invitation has been given to certain persons to be of this body of Christ. There is only one door by which these may come into the body. It is the door of sacrifice, baptism into Christ’s death. We are accepted only by giving up our own will, and taking instead the will of God. We pledge ourselves to walk in Jesus’ steps, to become his followers, his disciples. We are buried with him and rise to walk in newness of life. — Romans 6:4.

But it is not sufficient that we take these steps, not sufficient that we have received the holy Spirit, and have been accepted of the Father. We should be sure that we continue to abide in Christ. Let us ask ourselves, Are we having the experiences common to all who are associated with Jesus? One of the ways to be sure that we are abiding in him is to realize that we still love him. Another is to know that we are still in harmony with God’s Word. A third way is that we have no will but the Lord’s will. Still another is to have his peace in our hearts and lives as the ruling and controlling influence.

Profession Insufficient

Many have made a profession of being members of the body of Christ who do not give evidence of being his. Our text says that any one who professes to be in Christ ought so to walk even as the Master walked. And how did the Master walk? He lived daily in harmony with the will of the heavenly Father. He was fully submissive to the Father’s will. And this meant sacrifice unto death — the cruel death of the cross.

Whoever has our Lord’s spirit, and is controlled by the same will, is a member of the body of Christ, and will seek to walk after this fashion, to do the will of God in all things. This will mean a walk of holiness, of full devotion to God, and of opposition to sin. Whoever is consecrated to God is opposed to every sinful thing; for God and sin are in opposition. God stands for his own righteousness, and sin is a violation of that righteousness. (1

John 3:4). Whoever walks as Jesus walked is in harmony with the divine Word and will. We are not to trust to our impressions, our own conceptions of what is right and advantageous, as many others do; but the Word of the Lord is to abide in us, and to govern our lives. Jesus said, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" — "everything written in the Book." And so it is to be with us. We must abide in him, walk in him, and be willing to do "everything written in the Book" — not merely forcing ourselves to it, saying, I will take this course; but saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is written in my heart." — Psa. 40:7,8.

Proofs of Sonship

All who have accepted Christ claim, in a general way at least, to be sons of God, that Christ is their Elder Brother, and that they belong to this great family that God is selecting from the sons of men. They consider themselves heirs with Christ to the great kingdom to come. But not all who claim to be sons of God are such. A great many are making this claim. Statistics tell us that there are millions of professed Christians; but we cannot think that many of these millions are sons of God. The Apostle Paul calls our attention to the fact that since we cannot read the hearts we must go by the professions which others make by mouth and by conduct. But professions of the mouth are not to be taken as final. We know that those who are sons of God will be led by his Spirit. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

God's children, begotten of his holy Spirit, will make some manifestation of their harmony with this general Spirit of God. If they are, therefore, walking in unrighteousness, making no endeavour to stem the tendencies of sin in themselves, if they prefer error rather than truth, their fruits condemn them; for God stands for truth, as was exemplified in our Lord Jesus.

Whoever, therefore, has the Spirit of God, is willing to sacrifice himself that he may serve the truth. He loves the truth, and will manifest this fact by the spirit of love and zeal. Satan is the personification of sin, envy, hatred, malice, strife. Righteousness, love, joy, peace, are fruits of the holy Spirit. Wherever we see the works of the devil manifested we have reason to question that such a one is a child of God. The spirit of envy, the spirit of hatred, the spirit of malice, the spirit of opposition to the truth, the spirit of unrighteousness — these are to be repudiated and overcome by all who would be sons of God.

Yet despite one's best efforts, he might still find in his flesh tendencies to sin which would give him a great deal of trouble. He may take courage for the assurances of the Scriptures that the Lord looketh on the heart. Likewise in regard to others, we should judge according to the endeavour, the intention. Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the spirit of love. And this spirit will make one wish to make reparation, if he has done wrong or been in error. To do so shows that it was not his spirit, his will to do wrong, but that he was merely entrapped for a time. But one who continues to do according to his natural tendencies, with no evidence of going in the right direction and of serving the truth, has reason to doubt that he is a child of God.

Walk As He Walked

The Apostle's thought seems to be that those who profess to be the Lord's followers, profess to be Christians, should see to it that their walk in life is in harmony with their profession. The word disciple signifies one who follows — as a pupil follows his teacher. We recognize Christ as our Redeemer and also as our Pattern, our Instructor, in the glorious things which the Father has invited us to share with our Saviour. If, therefore, we say that we are in him, this profession should be borne out by our walk in life. We should walk as he walked.

But we are not perfect — how can this be done? The answer is that we "are not in the flesh, but in the spirit." God does not look upon our imperfect flesh. As New Creatures we are not fleshly beings, but spiritual. The Apostle is in our text speaking of that walk that the Master had after he made consecration. He walked in this way three and a half years. It was a walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. And so with us. We are walking, not according to the flesh, but according to the new creature. We reckon ourselves dead according to the flesh, and the Lord so reckons us. If then, we are dead to the flesh, we are not to walk according to the desires of the flesh.

We are to walk as our Lord walked, in our general deportment. We are to love everything that is good and to avoid everything that is evil. We are to walk as nearly as possible in the footsteps of our Lord and Exemplar. We cannot in an imperfect body walk up to all the perfection of Jesus, who was perfect in his flesh as well as in his spirit. But we are to walk as he walked — in the same path, in the same direction, toward the same glorious goal toward which he walked. And so doing, faithful day by day, we shall by his grace attain the same exceeding great reward.

Pure In Heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matt. 5:8.

The sixth of the Beatitudes calls for “purity of heart” in all who would attain to the greatest blessings God has to bestow; purity of heart — purity of motive, of intention, of effort, of will — purity in the sense of sincerity, of transparency, of truthfulness.

The thought of “pure in heart” is not perfection of conduct nor of word, nor of thought, but perfection of intention as respects all of these. Our desire and effort must be for perfection — in thought, word and deed. The standard before us to which our hearts, our wills, must give assent is the divine standard. “Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) God has set no lower standard than this absolute perfection, but he has provided for us grace, mercy and peace through Christ, if we will walk in his footsteps, — this purity of heart being one of the essential steps in the narrow way.

Only the pure in heart have the promise of seeing God. They continue faithfully to the end of the pilgrimage, not only attaining the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ in the present life (Rom.8:29) in their purity of heart, purity of intention, sincerity of their efforts toward God and men, but eventually according to the Lord’s promise, they shall, by the power of the first resurrection, be changed from earthly to heavenly, spiritual conditions. Then, as the Apostle declares, “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.” And when we have thus become changed to be like the glorious Son of God, who is “the express image of the Father’s person,” we shall be able also unquestionably to see the Heavenly Father himself, and shall be introduced to him by our dear Redeemer — “complete in him,” without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.” — 1 John 3:2; Heb. 1:3; Eph. 5:27; Col. 2:10.

In this, as in the other blessings, a portion, a foretaste comes in the present life. There is such a thing as having the eyes of our understanding opened, that we may be enabled to “comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ.” (Eph. 3:18) But not all have this opening of the mental eye; not all are privileged to see the glories of Jehovah’s character in symmetrical harmony, divine justice, wisdom, love and power co-ordinated and co-operating in unison for the blessing of every creature, according to the purpose which God purposed in himself before the world was.

But who may enjoy this blessing, this clearer vision, and who may, by seeing it, be enabled more and more to grow in likeness of that glorious perfection? Only “the pure in heart,” only the sincere, the honest-hearted. Those who have a double mind, a double will, are Scripturally said to have a double vision, a double eye. They see spiritual things proportionately indistinctly. Many of God’s people have failed thus far to grow up into Christ in all things, they see something of the heavenly things, and something of the earthly; they see but dimly and indistinctly the lines of the divine character, and proportionately they lack ability to copy it. Let all who have named the name of Christ seek more and more to have but the one Master, and an eye single to his glory and service — a pure, a sincere, a faithful heart.

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord’ Heb. 12: 14

O, Let my love be such to Thee,
That I may ever grateful be
To suffer stigma, brand or shame,
And count it honour for Thy Name
Who didst so much for me.