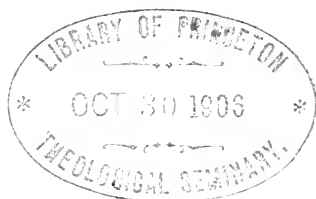


# The Teaching of Jesus

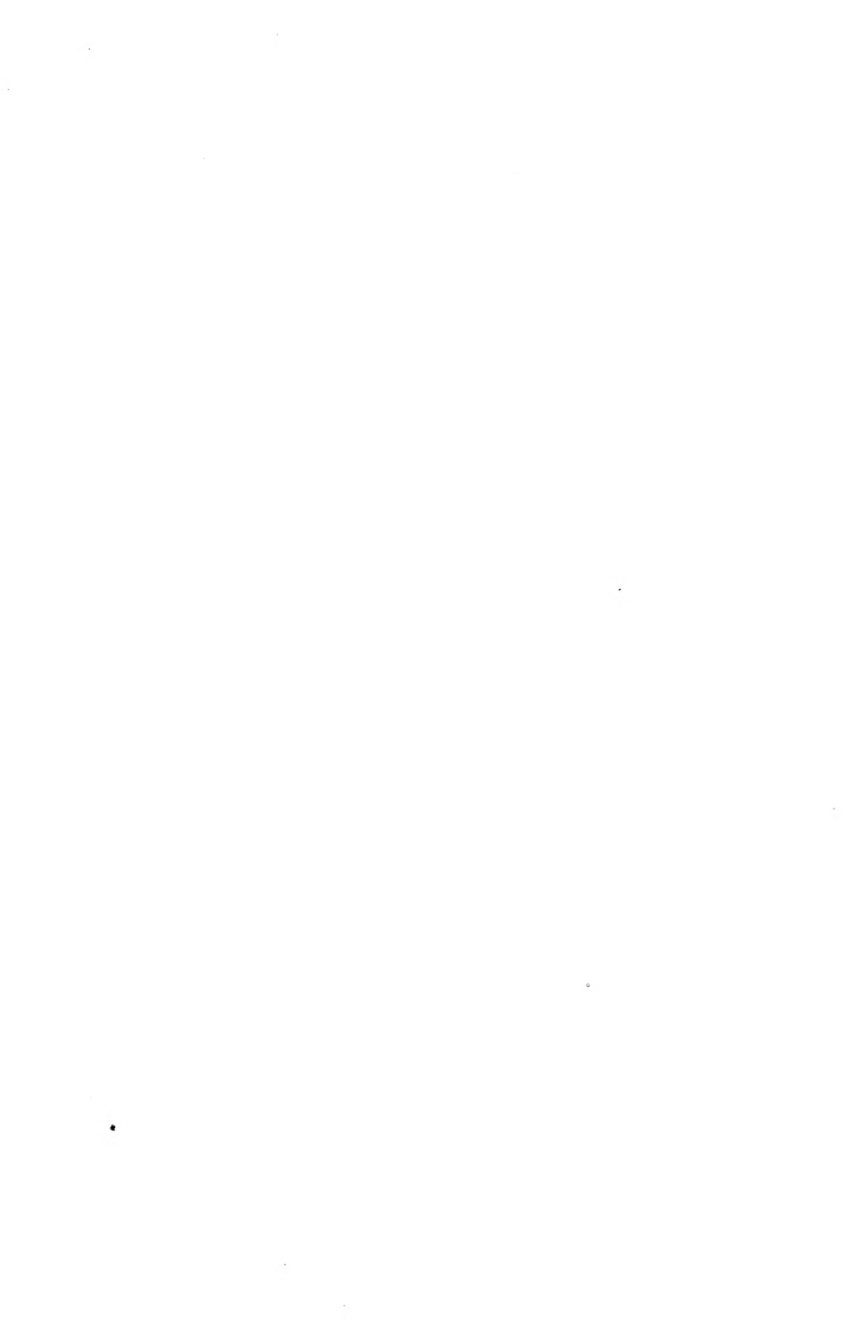


CONCERNING  
THE CHRISTIAN  
LIFE





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THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS  
*Edited by* JOHN H. KERR, D. D.

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THE TEACHING OF JESUS  
CONCERNING  
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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GERARD B. F. HALLOCK, D. D.

# THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

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AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

# THE TEACHING OF JESUS

CONCERNING

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

*By*  
*Gerard B. F. Hallock, D. D.*

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## CHAPTER I

### *Its Supreme Importance*

**A** GOOD man over eighty years of age, speaking of the forces which contributed to prolong his life and strength and promote his happiness and usefulness, said, "I have made religion the principal thing in my life." He said it not boastfully, but with expressions of sincere gratitude to God. He had been an earnest Christian for more than sixty years. He knew where to place religion. With him prayer, spiritual life, Christian character, were not used as a means to accomplish some worldly end. He was not religious

merely that he might get to heaven. Religion was the chief thing. He prized it above all things else. He sought it more diligently and clung to it more tenaciously than anything else.

He was right. Some men do not give religion any place in their lives. They think they can do without it. They have other aims which they consider higher, or to which they give more careful attention. Others seek religion and hold it in esteem, but they do not make it the principal thing. They think more of something else. Religion has a place in their lives, as they suppose, but it is a low place, an obscure corner. It does not come to the front. But those who give religion no place or a low place in their lives not only act contrary to their own reason and higher impulses, but they violate the whole spirit of revelation, and especially the definite and repeated teachings and commands and exhortations of Jesus.

There is nothing plainer in the teaching of Jesus than that religion is worthy of being the principal thing and that He wanted men to make it such—that He desired them to give to the Christian life the place of supreme importance. He said, “Seek ye first His (God’s) kingdom, and His righteousness” (Matt. vi. 33), and, “Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life” (John vi. 27). To one who came running and kneeling and inquiring of Him the way of life, but who would not definitely enter upon it when told what to do, Jesus said, “One thing thou lackest” (Mark x. 21). The thing he lacked was plainly the principal thing. Jesus so regarded it. The young man was very rich, but plainly he was not “rich toward God.” Well did Jesus, on another occasion, ask, “For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life?”

(Mark viii. 36, 37). He places religion before pleasure (Matt. xvi. 24). If any pleasure interferes with our spiritual life, it must be given up. He sets religion before wealth (Luke xiv. 33), before fame (John xv. 18), before education (Matt. xi. 29), before temporal support (Matt. vi. 19), before health, before personal liberty, before father, mother, or life itself (Matt. iv. 19; Luke xiv. 26).

One cannot but recall His word to Martha, who was so anxious about her household cares that she had not time to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn His wish and will—how He told her that only one thing was needful and that Mary had chosen that good part which could never be taken away from her (Luke x. 38–42). In other words, to listen to Jesus, to receive His truth, to stand in personal relations to Him, to submit to His direction, is of greater importance than any anxious thought about our daily task, important as that task may be in its place. Then

there is the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the wise having oil in their vessels (Matt. xxv. 1-13). It is a lesson to show us that we should have reserve of character so that we shall be prepared for sudden emergencies, even that greatest and most important emergency, when the Lord Himself shall come. The supreme importance of the Christian life is definitely taught by Jesus in many other parables also, such as that of the treasure hid in the field (Matt. xiii. 44), of the pearl of great price (Matt. xiii. 45, 46), and in the solemn warning contained in that of the "rich fool" (Luke xii. 16-21). It is absolutely the chief thing according to the teaching of Jesus. And He had the perfect vision. He stood in the proper position, because of His relation to God and to eternity, to judge things aright. He knew, and it is our highest wisdom to learn His estimate, what things are of supreme worth, and what things if neglected are so neglected at

our eternal peril. He said, "Except ye believe that I am He, ye shall die in your sins" (John viii. 24). There can be no question but that Jesus always presented the Christian life before men as the thing of supreme importance.

### *His Redeeming Mission*

But surely we cannot be surprised at this, for His whole mission in the world was to make possible to men the Christian life, or the life of Christians. The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10). He gave His life a "ransom for many." There is no word that tells us of His coming to the world, of His incarnation, of His life among men, of His solicitude for their welfare, of His sufferings and death on the cross, which does not at the same time tell us of the tremendous importance of the Christian life.



*Its Supreme Importance* 7

Christ's call to men is a call to proper emphasis. He wants us to put first things first, to place the emphasis of life where it really belongs. The meaning of an uttered sentence is often determined by the place of emphasis. Exact truth may be written only to be perverted by a wrong stress of voice. So the meaning of life may be determined not only by what we put into it and what we leave out of it, but also by what we emphasize.

Most people are familiar with the effects of an ill-adjusted camera, when the right focus has not been produced. We have seen the picture of a beautiful child taken all out of proportion, with the feet as large as the whole body—a monstrosity. The pictures some of us make of life are monstrosities, due to ill-adjustment, to getting things in wrong perspective or out of proportion. The purpose of Jesus' teaching concerning the Christian life was to lead us to place

the emphasis where it belongs—to put first things first.

*First Things First*

It is a part of the confusion with which the world is crowded that the right order of things is often inverted. The wrong order of right things may be a great evil. Disordered or disproportionate truth may be the worst of error. One of the great purposes of Jesus' teaching was to re-establish the series; to teach us which is to be first and which second, which to make subordinate and which supreme. In the restored world many things that are now first with us will be last, and the last first.

Some people put last things first, to the utter neglect of first things. This is the case with those whose great concern is to become rich and great in this world. There are many such. They think of nothing else but this world. They devote all their time and energy to wealth-

getting or honor-getting, to "getting on in the world," as they call it, and in many cases they are very successful. But in so doing they run an awful risk to their immortal souls. "They that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition" (I. Tim. vi. 9). Such prosperity is a curse and not a blessing. This is one phase of what Jesus meant when He said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark x. 23).

The same is the case with those who allow their whole attention to be taken up with the cares of this world. There is danger from both the "deceitfulness of riches" and the "care of the world" (Matt. xiii. 22). Everything good may be choked out of our lives by either of these things. We live in a busy world, in a bustling age, in a period of great commercial competition, when much

time and great effort are required for persons to maintain a respectable position, provide for their families, educate their children, see that neither their sick nor well are in want ; and on this account, many allow the cares of this world to absorb their attention, to the utter neglect of their eternal interests. The same is also the case with those whose minds are absorbed with the pleasures of the world. These are those who follow "the course of this world" in all its rounds of frivolity, vanity and folly, to the utter neglect of God and their eternal well-being. They that live in pleasure are dead while they live, putting last things first to the utter neglect of first things.

#### *Preoccupation of Mind*

When Professor Pritchard, of Oxford, was once asked if it was not the tendency of scientific thinking to unsettle religious faith and devotion, he replied : " It is pre-occupation of mind rather than science

that is, and always has been, the prolific parent of skepticism and religious indifference." And then he went on to ask : "Are not the preoccupations of high positions, of ambition, of literature, of money-getting and money-spending, of conceit, of sensual habits, and even of idleness, at least as unfriendly to the hearty acceptance of Christian revelation as are the preoccupations of scientific pursuits?" This witness is true. A great many men, even those of strong minds, flatter themselves that they do investigate religion and have not been able to accept it, when as a matter of fact they have been neglecting it for other pursuits and have never given it any continued thought or attention. In other words, they put last things first to the utter neglect of first things. Like the men to whom Christ spake the parable of the Great Supper, they are preoccupied with minor things, business, cares, pleasure, and so "with one consent began to make

excuse" (Luke xiv. 18-20). Yet the very purpose of that parable of Jesus was to tell men of the first importance of the Gospel provision and the invitation to partake of it.

*First Things By and By*

There are other people who put last things first, but intend to attend to first things by and by. Their great concern is to establish themselves in trade first, to succeed in their profession first, to get on in the world first, to become rich or great or honored first, and then become religious—then seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. But this is a great mistake to make. It is a distinct reversing of the advice and command of Jesus. It is living in a constant state of deliberate disobedience to Him. It is an especially wicked way in which to live, because of their selfishness in seeking their own things, and not "the things that are Christ's," and because they are

running counter to God in all they do. It is wrong, too, because it is distrustful toward both the providences and promises of Jesus (*cf.* Matt. vi. 25–34 and Luke xii. 27).

It is a mistake to put last things first, intending to attend to first things by and by, especially because of the danger it brings that we may die without religion. Well did Paul remind the Corinthians, “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II. Cor. vi. 2). There is the danger that the things we put off we may never attend to, or that we may die in the midst of our days before we have attended to them. If we prosper, we may be puffed up with our prosperity and thereby become increasingly disinclined to religion, and neglect it even down to old age, for nothing is more deceitful than riches; or we may be cut off unexpectedly in the midst of our prosperity before we have sought the kingdom of God. Plainly it

is great folly to put last things first, intending to attend to first things by and by.

The only way in which we can obey Jesus and act wisely, therefore, is to do exactly what He tells us and put first things first—seek “first” God’s kingdom and His righteousness.

### *The Prior Engagement*

We should seek it “first” in point of time. We are neither to put it off, nor to allow anything else to get in ahead of it. This is the prior engagement of life. To the young it means that they are to seek both entrance into and the righteousness of God’s kingdom while they are young. To those who may be middle-aged, or aged, or very old, it means the same. In point of time this is to be the very first thing. There is to be absolutely no delay about it on any pretense whatsoever (Matt. viii. 21, 22).

We should seek it “first,” too, as a



matter of the first and highest importance. Nothing else can be of any importance as compared with the attainment of a part in the kingdom of God and the righteousness of it. This is the pearl of greatest price, the supreme treasure, the indispensable blessing, the one thing only that can make us happy here and hereafter. We should place it "first" in point of time. We should make it "first" as a matter of importance. "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom." "She is more precious than rubies, and none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her."

It is right and proper for us to take into consideration also the gracious promises Jesus almost always connects with His commands, as a matter of comfort and encouragement in our obeying them. When He tells us not to be "anxious" about what we shall eat, or what we shall drink, or wherewithal we shall be clothed, He adds, "For your heavenly Father

knoweth that ye have need of all these things ” (Matt. vi. 32). His injunction is, “ But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you ” (Matt. vi. 33). Heirship to God’s eternal kingdom and righteousness does not cut us off from temporal blessings. These things will be “ added,” or given over and above. As some one has well said, “ They will be thrown in among a crowd of greater blessings.” The good things of the present life are not reserved only for the wicked. Satan does not treat his followers better than God does His. When Solomon first asked wisdom, God gave him riches and honor also. What is profitable for the next world is profitable for this one, too. That “ honesty is the best policy ” even worldly men assert. That “ godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come,” it is time all men knew.

*The King of our Lives*

The fact is that the Christian who makes Jesus King, who puts His kingdom first, His rule supreme, is both the happiest and the most blessed among men.

We have somewhere read that on one occasion Jenny Lind was invited by the king of her country to sing in the royal palace at a festival; but the festival was to be held on the Sabbath, and her conscience would not allow her to sing at any such public gatherings on the Lord's Day. She therefore refused to attend. The king came in person and pleaded with her, but her response was, "There is a higher King than your majesty. I owe my first allegiance to Him." She put religion first. She put Christ first, and made Him the real King of her life.

It is our duty to crown Christ, to enthrone Him in our hearts and over our lives. Nothing short of this is giving

religion, the Christian life, its place of proper importance.

We should make it the principal thing because if it is not first it is not anything. A religion which is not above all else is no religion. So soon as anything else intrudes between the soul and God, giving Him an inferior place, He is nothing to us. To reduce Him to a place lower than the throne is to exclude Him. We do not know Him at all if we do not know Him as Lord of all. His love is first, His desires first, His name first. Religion must have the first place in our thought, in our affections, in our pursuit, in our confidence, yes, in our whole life. Christ put our salvation first, and left heaven to "seek and to save that which was lost," even suffering the death of the cross that we might have life eternal. To undervalue His work is the deepest possible disrespect and disloyalty.

If our religion is not first it is not religion at all. When the young lawyer asked

Christ what commandment is first of all, He answered, "The first is, Hear, O Israel ; The Lord our God, the Lord is one : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength " (Mark xii. 29, 30).

Our usefulness, too, depends on our giving religion the first place. We may be useful in a limited way without religion. Our usefulness is not wholly destroyed when we make religion secondary. But we shall never fill the place God designed for us until we shall make the Christian life first. Life must be a comparative failure so long as the throne of the heart is occupied by some one else besides God. He alone is King and Lord.

Our happiness also depends on placing religion first. There is such a thing as being too religious to enjoy sin and too sinful to enjoy religion. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters ; for either he

will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon " (Matt. vi. 24). Those who try to serve two masters make the unhappiest work out of life. They have neither the " pleasures of sin for a season " nor the joys of religion. With God held in an inferior place no one can be deeply happy. The joy of the half-hearted Christian is adulterated and unsatisfactory. Never can the soul enter into the joy of the Lord until the Lord of glory is enthroned in his heart.

### *Salvation*

Salvation depends on this. One who does not make religion the principal thing in his life is not really saved. He may take to himself a little comfort that he has done something religious. He may flatter himself that he shall get safely through because he prays and reads the Bible occasionally and attends on

some religious services. But his religion is not genuine, it is not thorough. He holds it, not as the dearest thing in the world, not as his chief delight, but as a necessary precaution against future misery. To be in such a state is to misunderstand religion from its very foundation, to lack vital religion entirely. It is to think more of, and care more for, something else than God. It is definitely to disobey the fundamental command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

## CHAPTER II

### *Its Beginning*

**T**HE Christian life, presented by Jesus as the one thing of supreme importance, He also tells us must have a beginning. By nature we are sinners, alienated from the life of God and guilty before His law. If we come into the new, saved life, there must be a change from what we are by nature. This change is of so marked a character that it is called by Jesus Himself by the striking name of the new birth. The necessity of this change is stated or implied constantly in His teach-



ings. He calls it a passing from death unto life. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John v. 24). The same condition of the sinner was also probably referred to by Jesus when to one who sought excuse for delay in obeying His call saying, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," He answered, "Follow me, and leave the dead (the spiritually dead) to bury their own dead" (Matt. viii. 21, 22). The apostle John, who stood especially near to Jesus and had His mind so fully, evidently adopted the same expression for man's unregenerate condition, when he said: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death" (I. John iii. 14). Paul expressed the same truth most forcibly when he said to the Ephesian Christians,

“And you did He make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins” (Eph. ii. 1). In his second letter to the Corinthians he stated the thought still more emphatically, saying, “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (or, there is a new creation): the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (II. Cor. v. 17).

The necessity of this change, together with its nature, its methods, and its results, is most systematically and fully set forth by Jesus in His conversation with Nicodemus (John iii. 1-21). In clear and emphatic words Jesus told Nicodemus that he must not merely be born again, but be born from a lower into a higher sphere of being. The Jewish ruler was alive physically and mentally, but he was dead spiritually, and until he received spiritual life from above he could know nothing of spiritual things. This new birth Jesus declares to be a mystery. “The wind bloweth where it

will, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But all life is a mystery. This spiritual renewal is accomplished by the influence and operation of the Holy Spirit. How it is brought about is not readily understood, cannot be understood ; but we see the effects and know that they are real. No one can see the wind, but we can see the effects of the wind, and some very strong and substantial bodies go down before it. I have felt the Spirit of God working in my heart just as much as I have felt the wind blowing in my face. There are a great many things people cannot reason out that they believe and know. Like the man whose sight was restored by Christ, they may not be able to tell how the cure was wrought, but they can say, with that man, " One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see " (John ix. 25).

*An Object for Faith*

In His conversation with Nicodemus Jesus did not stop with the mystery of the new birth, but presented to him an object for his faith. This was Himself and the work He should accomplish on the cross. He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him. He that believeth on Him is not judged: he that believeth not is judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God (John iii. 14-18). It should be remembered that "to believe on" Christ, as the term is used in the

New Testament, always means to trust, to confide in, to rely upon Him. A Christian, therefore, is one who believes on Christ. He has entrusted his whole life, with its sin, its guilt, its ruin, its need, its security for eternity, its redemption, cleansing and transformation, to the hands of the mighty Saviour, the strong Son of God. Those who do thus believe on Christ are born anew, born from above ; that is, there is a new, a divine life within them. Jesus speaks of it as a well of water in the believer "springing up unto eternal life" (John iv. 14). The result is shown in new affections, new desires, new hopes, new aims. If we are truly born again the life of heaven has really begun within us. "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 21). This life may be very feeble in its beginning, like a seed planted in a garden, but the seed is from heaven and the new life in us has truly begun. "That which is born of the Spirit," said Jesus, "is spirit."

It is the life of the Spirit begun in a human soul. Paul put this truth in a very striking way when he said, "It is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). Jesus said that a Christian is a "branch" of the true Vine (John xv. 5).

### *Christ the Way*

In John xiv. 6, Jesus says, "I am the way: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." And again in x. 9 he says, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." It is worthy of special note that He does not say "I am a way," as if there were other ways, but, "I am *the* way"—the only way; no one can come to the Father, or to heaven by any other. Jesus does not say, "I am a door," but "I am *the* door," that is the one and only door into the fold of God. Jesus Himself is the way. He, the Lord of life and glory, took upon Him our nature, suffered, bled, and died on the

cross to be the door—the way of entrance to eternal life. “By me,” says Jesus, “if any man enter in, he shall be saved.” “Any man”—that means high or low, rich or poor, learned or ignorant. “Any man”—that means whatever his former character, however many his sins, however hard his heart, if he enter by the door, if he truly come to Christ, he shall be saved. “He shall be saved,”—his sins shall be pardoned; his heart shall be renewed; he shall be set free from the love, the power, the dominion of sin, and in the end shall be brought safe home to heaven.

If a ship wants to trade at any port of the many upon the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, it must pass through the narrow Strait of Gibraltar. Large ships or small, valuable cargoes or those of little worth, it is all one; they must go through the same narrow opening. So Jesus said, “I am the door,” and, “No man cometh unto the Father but by me.”

But, glad and happy fact, He is the way, the ever-available way, for all who will enter by Him.

*Christ the Life*

If the process of the beginning of the Christian life could be described it would probably be something like this: We hear God's testimony concerning His Son. We begin to feel that He is just such a Saviour as we need. We begin to recognize His suitableness and sufficiency to meet our wants. Our guilt and pollution seem too heavy for us to bear. We become aware that He is willing to take both, and give us pardon, peace, and power. The Holy Spirit holds Christ before us, presses Him upon us, and something within us begins to say that we ought to receive Him. We hesitate until we can hesitate no longer. Shall we reject God's testimony to us? Shall we silence the voice that begins to speak within us? Shall we reject the only Sav-



our? No, we open the door of our hearts—and Christ enters. The mystical union with Christ is established. We have the Son of God, and with Him we have eternal life (John vi. 47). We begin to realize that it is no longer we that live, but Christ living in us, working in us, and shining through us; we begin to feel that for us to live is Christ and to die is gain—that whether we live or die we are Christ's and He is ours. We have the spirit of adoption and we cry, Abba, Father. We did not believe on the Son because we had this spirit of adoption, but we have this spirit of adoption, this assurance of hope, this indwelling power of an endless life, because we believe on the only begotten Son of God. Our faith has transformed God's testimony to us to God's testimony in us, and we begin to realize that in giving us His Son God has indeed given us eternal life.

No truth is given stronger emphasis in

the teachings of Jesus than the fact that He is the life of men. He said, "The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John vi. 33). He said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35). "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me.

This is the bread which came down out of heaven: not as the fathers ate, and died; he that eateth this bread shall live forever" (John vi. 53-58). "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). And, "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John x. 10).

*Varied Experience*

The experience of the beginning of the new life in the soul is exceedingly varied. Probably no two cases are exactly alike. The manner of its beginning, or of the manifestation of its beginning, is of little importance. The important thing is that it shall begin.

Sometimes the Christian life begins very simply, especially with the young. Among those who have been under good influences in the home, in the church, in the Sabbath-School, and have been liv-

ing sweet and gentle lives, free from grosser forms of evil, it is unreasonable to expect any violent "experience" or marked change in the outward manner of living. Failing to recognize this fact many parents continue to wrestle with the Lord in prayer for the conversion of their children long after the change has really taken place; while the children and young people themselves, on account of the same mistaken impression, continue in strong efforts and deep, unsatisfied longings to become Christians long after God has indeed accepted them and they are actually living devotedly in His service.

It is well for us to recognize how simply and quietly the Christian life sometimes begins. A thoughtful girl of sixteen years, living in the country at a distance from the church, which made attendance irregular, read, on a Sunday, the memoir of a Christian woman. On closing the volume, she said to herself,

“That was a beautiful life.” After a little thought she added, “And I should like to live such a life.” A few minutes later she kneeled down and said, “Lord, I will try from this time.” The decision was made. She went on steadily, and is a useful and influential woman, honored and beloved, and widely known for her beautiful and devout character.

So gentle a call or so sweet an experience is not limited to children only. A man described his conversion thus to Rev. Mark Guy Pearse: “I never professed to be a Christian, or anything like that; but one morning as I was going down to my business, I was thinking of those words, ‘Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?’ I did wish with all my heart that I could answer them as Peter did. I felt very sad that I could not. Then it came to me, Well, if I cannot say so much as Peter, could I not turn them round a little and find something easier? So I began to think there was

one thing I could not say. I could not say, 'Lord, thou knowest that I do not love Thee,' and I found some comfort in that. At last I got bold enough to look up and say, 'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I want to love Thee.' Well, then I began to think about His great love to me; I thought of His life, of His words, of His cross, and almost before I knew what I was doing I looked up and said, 'Thou knowest that I do love Thee.'" And at that moment the consciousness of a new life dawned on his soul.

#### *An Artist Converted*

Certainly the circumstances and experiences of the beginning of the new life differ greatly. Some one tells of an infidel Swiss artist, who was serving the devil to the extent of his ability, who went to Sheffield, England, not long ago. There he was asked to make a caricature of a Salvation Army meeting. He went

to the meeting on that errand, and scanned the faces of the people. With his own heart like the troubled sea that could not find rest, tossed and driven by tempests of passion, and tormented by a conscience burdened with sin, he looked on the assembled worshippers and saw peace written on their faces, and an inward joy beaming from their countenances. The sight convinced him of his sinfulness. He saw that these people had something which he lacked and which he needed. He turned his feet unto God's testimonies, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, found peace through the blood of the cross, and rejoiced with the rejoicing ones.

## CHAPTER III

### *Its Evidences*

**T**HAT the Christian life must have a beginning, that a change of heart is essential, Jesus makes perfectly plain when He says, "Except one be born anew," that is, from above by the Holy Spirit's agency, "he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). The same truth, as we have seen, is repeatedly taught and constantly assumed in His addresses to men. So, then, there is no hope for us until our hearts are changed. It becomes therefore an exceedingly important question: "How



can I know that this work has been done in my heart?''

Every truly penitent believer is accepted of God, but not every one is conscious of the fact. Yet to have such assurance is certainly highly desirable. It is not asserted that this is essential, at least in the beginning of the Christian life, for the Holy Spirit may have changed the heart of a sinner even when he is complaining and sorrowing that his heart is not changed. But it certainly is a grace that ought to be sought, and is the condition of much peace and power and Christian usefulness. It is important, moreover, because indifference in regard to it is usually a sign of a lack of any deep sense of the need of salvation (Matt. ix. 13). Persons who have never realized their lost condition will not be deeply concerned to know if they are saved. With them a general lethargy of spiritual feeling takes the place of a genuine assurance. Those to whom sin and sal-

vation are not vivid realities, but only vague terms having little personal application, will scarcely desire to seek after a full assurance of hope. But those who are awake to these great realities cannot be content with less than a confident persuasion of their acceptance with God. They will dread nothing more than the possibility of self-deception in the matter, and will be satisfied with nothing short of a well-founded, because divinely warranted, assurance, as far removed from presumption on the one hand as it is from indifference on the other.

#### *Some Evidences of Salvation*

It is very desirable, then, to know whether the new life has begun in us or not. The apostle John stood very near to Jesus and he laid much emphasis on the evidences of salvation. Naming some of these he showed the importance of our being consciously able to bear the tests, saying, "Hereby shall we know

that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him: because if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, we have boldness toward God" (I. John iii. 19-21). If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. It is certainly very desirable, as well as most delightful, to have this confidence, and there are many valuable results in our lives that flow from possessing it.

*We May Know*

That one may know whether he is saved or not is clearly taught by Jesus. He certainly wished all His followers to advance far beyond the mere hope that they have a hope (*cf.* John xvi. 5-11). On the other hand, our acceptance with God does not depend upon our feelings. We may be glad of that, for our feelings are very fluctuating things to ground our expectation of salvation upon. We

ground our hope of salvation upon God's finished work for us in redemption, and upon His spoken word of promise to accept us and save us when we turn to Him in Christ. But there are available tests, evidences of salvation which, if used, may help us to a knowledge as to whether we are Christians or not.

What are some of these evidences as we gather them from the teachings of Jesus?

### *We Know Jesus*

It is certainly true that we cannot follow Jesus unless we know Him. How can we know Him? We cannot meet Him face to face as His disciples met Him when He was on earth in human form. How can we get acquainted with Him? We may learn about Him in the Scriptures. "These are they which bear witness of me" (John v. 39). We should search the Scriptures until we become familiar with all that is told in them of

Jesus, especially His words, His works, His character ; until we have learned how He lived, how He loved, His patience, His gentleness, His thoughtfulness, His unselfishness, His great self-sacrifice. We should learn all we can about Him. But it is not enough to know about Him. We must know Him. It is quite possible, too, for us to have a personal acquaintance with Him. He says that He knows His own and His own know Him. " I am the good shepherd ; and I know mine own, and mine own know me " (John x. 14). He says concerning the obedient disciple, " I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him " (John xiv. 21). It is the special work of the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ and the things of Christ to us. " When He, the Spirit of truth, is come," said Jesus, " He shall guide you into all the truth : for He shall not speak from Himself ; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak : and He shall declare unto you

the things that are to come. He shall glorify me ; for He shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you ” (John xvi. 13, 14). Thus Jesus is revealed to us, and we come to know Him as a personal friend, knowing no other friend so well, so intimately. This intimate knowledge of Jesus may come as the result of long acquaintance, but certainly the one who begins to follow Him must know Him (*cf.* John i. 35-51).

### *We Trust Jesus*

The one in whom the new life has begun has some consciousness of belief in Jesus as the Son of God and of trusting in Him for salvation. This does not imply that he has a clearly defined grasp upon the doctrinal questions concerning Christ's nature ; but it does mean that he feels the need of a divine Saviour, that he believes Jesus to be God's Son and able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him (*cf.* Matt. xvi. 15-

17). It also means that the believer has more than a mere intellectual assent to the fact that Jesus is God's Son. He has a consciousness of yielding to Jesus, of casting himself upon Him as his only hope, of trusting Him for salvation (*cf.* Matt. iv. 20-22). The feeling is akin to that which the disciples had when others were leaving Jesus: "Jesus said therefore unto the twelve, Would ye also go away? Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi. 67, 68).

### *Best Ground of Assurance*

But the believer's best ground of assurance is found in the definite words and promises of Jesus Himself. Jesus said, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (John iii. 36). It is a matter of definite promise and revelation that he that believes on Christ is saved. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be

lifted up ; that whosoever believeth may in Him have eternal life ” (John iii. 14, 15). “ God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have eternal life ” (John iii. 16). When Jesus says that the one who believes on Him, relies upon Him for salvation, is saved, and I consciously trust Him, I then certainly have the right to an assurance that I am saved. This can be put, like any other point of reasoning, in the form of a syllogism. It is a matter of absolute revelation that he that believes in Christ is saved. This is the major proposition of the syllogism. The minor proposition is, “ I believe.” That has no need of revelation ; it belongs to the inner consciousness. Am I not just as sure that I believe as I am sure that my pulses beat? Now put the minor under the major proposition, and the infallible conclusion is, “ Therefore I am saved.”



This assurance springs up in the heart in consequence of several elements meeting together. The first is a strong faith in the word and promise of God. The second is the consciousness of the possession of that state of mind or character to which the promises are annexed. It is not simply faith, though faith is at the foundation. The fact is the Bible is full of promises, and they are addressed not to named individuals but to characters — whosoever loveth, whosoever believeth, whosoever obeyeth, whosoever trusteth, whosoever hopeth. Well, if I hope and trust and obey and love, the consciousness of possessing these graces gives me the assurance of the promises which God has annexed to these graces. Then, in the third place, there is that mysterious and royal gift, the witness together with our spirit of the Holy Spirit. These three evidences taken together give us reliable testimony upon which to trust that we have passed

from death unto life, from old things unto new.

We certainly cannot put too much confidence in what Jesus says. He says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John vi. 37). I come to Him. I have a right to believe that He has not cast me out. He says, "Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you ; for every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened " (Matt. vii. 7, 8). I ask, I seek, I knock, in my desire to be saved. I have a right to believe that He has answered, has been found of me, has opened unto me.

### *We Love Jesus*

The one in whom the new life has begun has some consciousness, too, that he loves Jesus. When the father of the child possessed of a demon was told by Jesus, "All things are possible to him

that believeth," straightway the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief" (Mark ix. 23, 24). Just so the one who has entered upon the new life loves Jesus, but cries out, "Oh, to love Thee more ; help Thou my lack of love !" But, weak as his love may be, he is conscious that he does love Him. He is able to say with Peter, "Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee" (John xxi. 17). A true Christian is not simply a baptized person, a church-member, a respecter of religion, but he is a person who has some definite relations toward Jesus. He trusts Jesus as his only hope of salvation. He hopes in Jesus as the one who fulfils his expectations. He follows Jesus as his example and as the one who will lead him to heaven (John xiii. 13-17). And, above all, he loves Jesus ; he has a personal attachment to Him, and a delight in Him, in His will, in His wish, in His success.

*Marks of Love*

Now, there are ways in which we can tell whether we have this love for Jesus or not. Love has a way of making itself known and felt. If we love Jesus we will love to think about Him. It is a characteristic of love that it likes to dwell in thought upon the object of its love. So a true Christian does not forget Jesus, His wishes, His cause, His honor, Himself. Jesus wants us to think of Him. He gave us the Lord's Supper to help us to keep Him in mind (Luke xxii. 19). He assured us that the Holy Spirit would aid us in this direction: "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said unto you" (John xiv. 26).

If we love Jesus we will be glad to hear about Him.

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear."

We like to hear of those whom we love.

If we love Jesus we will be glad to read about Him. We always rejoice to receive a message from an absent child, husband, or friend. So the messages Christ sends will be the Christian's delight. We have these messages in His Word. The true Christian loves to read them.

Moreover, if we love Jesus we will try to please Him. This is a trait of love; it always considers what will gratify the one loved. If we love Him we will try to do the things He will approve. We will strive not to do the things He disapproves. He Himself said that this is one of the definite evidences of the new life. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John xiv. 21). "He that loveth me not keepeth not my words" (John xiv. 24). "Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed Him, If ye abide in my

word, then are ye truly my disciples ; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free ” (John viii. 31, 32). Love does not murmur that Jesus’ requirements are strict ; it is scarcely aware that they are : His yoke is easy and His burden light (Matt. xi. 30). This is because of love. The true Christian has a consciousness of an affectionate choice of Jesus as his personal Saviour and Lord. He submits to Jesus’ will, makes Him the supreme object of his affections, and endeavors to do the things that will please Him. If we have a consciousness of a willingness to accept and cheerfully to do the will of Jesus we may know that we have been brought from death unto life. The spiritually dead do not care to please Him. Jesus Himself put the strongest emphasis upon this evidence of discipleship. “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ?” (Luke vi. 46). “Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it ”

(Luke xi. 28). He says that only those who hearing His words do them are building upon the rock (Matt. vii. 24, 25); that those who do them not are building on the sand (Matt. vii. 26, 27). "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, lest his works should be reprov'd. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God" (John iii. 20. 21).

*Love His Friends*

Again, if we love Jesus we will love His friends. This is a well known trait of love. We love our friends' friends. Jesus affirmed: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John xiv. 35). This evidence which is good to convince others is also good to assure our own hearts that we belong to Christ. It was upon this fact the apostle John laid so much emphasis in his first epistle. "He

that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him" (I John ii. 9, 10). "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not abideth in death" (I. John iii. 13, 14). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen" (I. John iv. 20). He then goes on to say that Jesus Himself is the authority for his statement of these evidences: "And this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also" (I. John v. 21). A man who loves all who love Jesus has good evidence of his present salvation. Love to the brethren is one of the best evidences to ourselves and to others that we are Christians. In a recent notable conver-



sion, of a professor in one of our colleges, the man humbly testified that the first evidence he had that he had passed from death unto life was this: "I began to have a greater love for others, for humanity, for people in general."

If we love Jesus we will be very careful of His good name and honor. This is another universal sign of love. Readiness to confess Him before men will therefore characterize the true Christian. Not to confess is both to disregard His wish—"Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" (Luke xii. 8)—and to deprive Him of the honor due to His name and of the help to His cause each volunteer won for His army may give. One may be naturally timid. To feel timid may not be a sign of lack of love to Jesus; but His true follower will endeavor by the grace of God to overcome his timidity and openly confess himself on the side of Jesus.

If we love Him we will also love to talk to Him and be with Him. This is why Christians love to pray, and to go to places where Jesus is found—where He has especially promised to meet them. It is also a reason why they look forward with delight toward heaven.

### *The New Life*

Now, these are all evidences of the new life. They are all stated or implied in the teachings of Jesus. He did not state in what degree they must be present in any disciple, or how many of them the disciple must be conscious of possessing at any given time. But they are tests we can apply to see if we be in the faith. They may be used by way of comparison. A Christian, whose assurance was coming to consciousness, once said: "I know that I am not what I ought to be; I know that I am not what I want to be; but, by the grace of God, I also know that I am not what I once was."

A young girl who presented herself for union with the church was asked: "Have you felt the consciousness of being a sinner?" She said, "Yes." "Are you a sinner now?" Again she answered, "Yes." "Then wherein are you different from what you were?" She replied, "Before I was a sinner running away from Christ: now I am a sinner running toward Him."

Surely the evidence of the new life in both these cases was good.

An esteemed woman, a professed Christian and useful in the Church, had a natural fear of death and a weak faith or assurance concerning the bliss beyond the grave. She called on her minister for advice and comfort. He knew she was really a devout and earnest Christian. He therefore endeavored to encourage her, comfort her heart and strengthen her faith. He said, "Well, suppose that you should die to-night, and go, as you sometimes fear, to the bad place. The

Bible teaches that our works do follow us—what we love to do here we shall have a desire to do hereafter. What would you do there but the things you are wont to do upon earth? You would try to form a Sabbath-school; you would institute a prayer-meeting; you would endeavor to do all the good in your power there as you do here. Satan, hearing you singing and praying and endeavoring to convert those around you, would soon turn you out. As long as you have the heartfelt desire to love, serve, obey and work for Christ, who has redeemed and renewed you, you have nothing to fear from Satan, and have no reason to dread hell; for you will not be allowed to enter there unless you first become depraved in heart and life and have the desire to make others so. The unrepentant sinner, if it were possible for him to reach heaven, would be miserable and wretched there; but you know that heaven is the place of your desire—the

place that, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, you are becoming fitted to enjoy.”

The pastor’s words lifted a veil from the heart of this woman. The same words give an excellent test to apply for evidences of the new life.

“The greatest thing that we can desire, next to the glory of God, is our own salvation ; and the sweetest thing we can desire is the assurance of our salvation. In this life we cannot get higher than to be assured of that which in the next life is to be enjoyed. All saints shall enjoy a heaven when they leave this earth ; some saints enjoy a heaven while they are here on earth.” (Joseph Caryl.)

## CHAPTER IV

### *Its Conflicts*

**T**HE Christian life is one long conflict between opposing forces, designated respectively the flesh and the Spirit, or between the old nature and the principles implanted within us by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Some of these forces are within the soul. Others are such as assail us from without. It is indeed true of this struggle, as Cæsar said of the battle he once fought in Africa against the partakers with Pompey, that in all other battles he was wont to fight for glory, but then

and there he was obliged to fight for his life. The Christian life is a conflict in which not alone our life, but our very soul is at stake. It might well be named a conflict for the soul on the battlefield of life.

*Struggle Anticipated*

It was never the plan of Jesus to hide from His followers the temptations and tests and struggles they would surely have to meet. He said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves" (Matt. x. 16). He also said, "I came not to send peace, but a sword," and showed how the one who would follow Him might expect foes not only among strangers, but even among those in his own household (Matt. x. 34-39). He said to His disciples, "Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God" (John xvi. 2). He promised the "crown of life," the "white stone," the "hidden manna," the "new name" to those

who should "hold fast," bear "tribulation," prove "faithful unto death" (Rev. ii. and iii.) He said that He Himself had been persecuted, therefore His disciples were not to be surprised when they should be persecuted also. "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his teacher, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household" (Matt. x. 24, 25). He advised men definitely to "sit down and count the cost" before entering upon the course of discipleship to Him (Luke xiv. 25-33), though He just as definitely gave to those who should venture the promise of His presence, His wisdom, and His aid.

### *Evil vs. Good*

Jesus certainly never hid from men the fact of the presence of evil and its



bitter opposition to the good. He says that where the good is sown there will appear "tares also." It was to convey this truth that He spoke one of His most significant parables: "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also" (Matt. xiii. 24-26). In explaining the parable of the sower and the various sorts of soil, He said that what He meant by saying that some seed fell by the wayside and the birds came and devoured them, was that to some hearers of the word "cometh the evil one, and snatched away that which hath been sown in his heart" (Matt. xiii. 1-23).

*Satan no Myth*

That evil is in the world no one denies. The experience of temptation is universal.

To the Christian this means the necessity of conflict. To live truly we must battle day by day. Satan is no medieval myth; but an actual and active foe who "as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour," (I. Pet. v. 8). Interpreting the parable of the tares Jesus said plainly: "The enemy that sowed them is the devil" (Matt. xiii. 39). On another occasion He said to certain unbelieving Jews: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John viii. 44). There is, then, such an enemy. (*Cf.* Matt. xxv. 41 and John xiii. 2). Cunning, powerful and treacherous, he hates God and hates the good. He tempted Christ (Matt. iv. 1-11; Mark i. 12, 13; Luke iv. 1-13). He wanted to "sift" Peter (Luke xxii. 31). And He wants to sift us too. Two things he especially

tries to do with us ; to draw us back from the new life into his service, or, failing in that, to make us just as inefficient as possible in Christian work. To make us inefficient he first attempts to lead us into sin. Yielding to sin he knows makes cowards of us. Our cowardice discourages us in the Christian life ; and when discouraged we are of almost no use in Christian work, for, as Mr. Moody used to say, " God seldom uses discouraged Christians." But Satan's real purpose is to destroy us. As Jael did to Sisera, so Satan would first put us to sleep, and then kill us.

A careful study of Jesus' own words concerning the Christian's great enemy cannot fail to be of utmost value in setting us on our guard against him. He speaks of him as " the evil one " (Matt. xiii. 19, 38, 39 ; *cf.* v. 37 ; vi. 13), as the " devil " (Matt. iv. 1-11 ; xiii. 39 ; xxv. 41 ; Luke iv. 8 ; viii. 12 ; John viii. 44 ; *cf.* Rev. xii. 9 ; xx. 2), as " Satan "

(Matt. iv. 10 ; xii. 26 ; Mark iii. 23, 26 ; iv. 15 ; Luke x. 18 ; xi. 18 ; xiii. 16 ; xxii. 31 ; *cf.* Rev. xii. 9 ; xx. 2), as the "prince [*ἄρχων*, ruler] of this world" John xii. 31 ; xiv. 30 ; xvi. 11), as the "tempter" (Matt. iv. 1, 3 ; Mark i. 13 ; Luke iv. 2, 12), as the "father of lies," a "liar," a "murderer from the beginning" (John viii. 44) as the "father of sinners" (Matt. xiii. 38 ; xxiii. 15 ; John viii. 38, 41, 44), as taking away God's word from the heart (Matt. xiii. 19 ; Mark iv. 15 ; Luke viii. 12), as suggesting evil thoughts and deeds to the heart (Matt. xvi. 23 ; Mark viii. 33 ; *cf.* John xiii. 2), as seeking to sift His followers (Luke xxii. 31), as mingling his sons with Jesus' followers (Matt. xiii. 25-30, 38-40), as oppressing men by sickness (Luke xiii. 16), as one who is yet to be "cast out" (John xii. 31), "judged" (John xvi. 11) and to go into eternal fire (Matt. xxv. 41 ; *cf.* Rev. xx. 10, 14). Compare also for "Beelzebub" Matt. xii. 24 ; Mark iii. 22 ; Luke xi.

15, for "Old Serpent" Rev. xii. 9; xx. 2, for "Dragon" Rev. xii. 3-17; xiii. 2, 4, 11; xvi. 13; xx. 2.

*Satan's Tactics*

Some of our first battles are the hardest we ever have to meet. Satan fights a few big battles with us at the beginning of the Christian life. He seeks to control at the outset. There is a mighty call for moral soldiership in these first struggles. But suppose we stand in these first big battles, does Satan then give up? Not at all; but he does change his tactics. His method then is to try to wear us out by a lot of little battles. This is the method the Boers pursued in South Africa, in their fight with England. The time came when they fought no more big battles; but they carried on a warfare just as carefully designed, more cunning and even more harassing than their earlier methods. So Satan tries to

wear us out with skirmishes. He tries to undermine our strength, to circumvent and circumscribe us, to defeat us by a long-continued, wearying, exhausting series of little battles. He sows in our minds doubt and distrust. He tries to lower by degrees our standard of right, and get us to compromise with evil at one point and then another. It is exceedingly important that we should keep on the lookout for Satan's second series of tactics. We are not safe yet just because we have won the first few big battles. Satan has infinite resources of deceit, and it will take watchfulness and a lot of the highest qualities of moral soldiership if we are to win on this battlefield of life.

No man need think that Satan will yield without a struggle. In an experience meeting in the mountains of Pennsylvania one man had murmured because for three years he had been following the Lord and yet had severe struggles

with the devil. A man of seventy arose and said, "It took me twenty years to get the hill back of my barn reasonably free from rattlesnakes, and though I have farmed the place for nearly fifty years I still occasionally meet one there. Brother, the devil is harder to deal with than rattlesnakes." Satan certainly never yields over a soul to Christ easily, and he has infinite resources of treachery and deceit and cunning at his command. We must expect to fight him, and we must count on keeping up the fight as long as we live.

*"Little Sins"*

Then, too, Satan has a way of tempting us with so-called "little sins." But these have in them very special dangers. For one thing, little sins have in them an element of definite affront and disobedience to God. They are a violation of His holy law, and whosoever shall "stumble in one point, he is become

guilty of all" (James ii. 10). That is, he is a lawbreaker. It is also a fact that the authority of God seems to be more despised in the commission of small sins than in the yielding to great; for little sins have in them ordinarily less of temptation and therefore more of wilfulness. Then, too, little sins greatly deface the image of God in the soul; just as in a costly mirror a little flaw is a serious detraction, or as in a rare and curious picture a little scratch is a great deformity. Little sins, moreover, maintain in us the habit and course of sinning. Indulging in them sets the heart in the way of thinking less and less seriously of sin, and the tendency toward wrongdoing becomes more and more fixed. It is sadly true also that what little sins lack in weight they usually make up in number. But one of the preéminent evils of little sins is that they so readily make way for greater sins. Satan, by his seemingly little temptations, nurses up young-



ling sins; but they do not stay younglings. By and by they arrive at full stature.

There is an Indian story of a morsel of a dwarf who asked a king to give him all the ground he could cover with three strides. The king, seeing him so small, said, "Certainly." Whereupon the dwarf suddenly shot up into a tremendous giant, covering all the land with the first stride, all the water with the second, and with the third he knocked the king down and took his throne.

"Who is it knocks so loud?" "A little lonely sin."  
"Slip through," we answer—and all hell is in!

When Pompey could not prevail with a certain city to admit and feed his army, he persuaded them to admit a few weak and maimed soldiers, who soon recovered their strength and opened the gates to the whole army. Thus Satan does not always assault, but by insinuations gains entrance to our hearts with a few small

sins—sins of infirmity. But these soon gather strength and subdue us. Thus profanity begins with but little oaths. Thieving begins with “pins and pence.” Drunkenness begins with one cup. Lust begins with a glance of the eye.

If Satan prevails with us to go with him one step out of the way we are in danger of making no stop short of the height of wickedness. He will make us take a second step and a third and so on, all the way to destruction. Each step is but one step. The last step in sin is but one step, as well as the first. So if Satan can prevail with us to take one step, why should he not prevail with us to take the last step as well as the first, seeing that it, too, is but one? Our second sin no more exceeds our first than our first does our duty, and so on to the end. It is but one step at a time all the way to destruction. Well did Jesus put so much emphasis on the craftiness of Satan, and tell us over and over again, “Watch and

pray, that ye enter not into temptation ” (Matt. xxvi. 41 ; Mark xiv. 38 ; Luke xii. 39). Well did He tell us also of the spirituality of the law, in the Sermon on the Mount, and on other occasions, so that we would be warned against the tendency to regard any sins as trivial. He told us how that anger is of the nature of murder, and that the impure thought or look is of the nature of adultery (Matt. v. 21-28).

*Temptation not always Evil*

But it should be borne in mind that Jesus never taught that temptation and the necessary conflict with sin are to be regarded always as evils. The main question is not how to escape temptation, but how to pass through it so as not to be harmed by it. Jesus' way of helping us is not always by keeping us out of conflicts. All the best things in life, the only things worth grasping, lie beyond the fields of struggle, and we can get

them only by overcoming. It would be no kindness to us were God to withdraw us into some sheltered spot whenever there is danger, or if He were to fight our battles for us, thus freeing us from all necessity to struggle.

“He who hath never a conflict hath never a victor’s palm,  
And only the toilers know the sweetness of rest and calm.”

We must meet temptation, and we must make up our minds to fight. Not to fight is to lose all. And there is really no need to yield, for we have Jesus’ promised aid (Matt. xxviii. 20). It is indeed possible to meet the strongest temptations and not be hurt by them. It has been done. Rightly meeting and victoriously resisting ever puts new fibre into the soul. The Indians have a saying that when a warrior kills a foe the spirit of the vanquished enemy enters the victor’s heart and adds new strength for

every coming contest. This is literally true in the Christian life. We grow stronger through our struggles and victories.

### *Our Need of Struggle*

Jesus' use of the word temptation did not always convey the idea of allurements to evil. Indeed His most frequent use of it was in the sense of testing, trying, proving. The disciple was to pray that he might not be put to the test, or, if tested, be approved (Matt. vi. 13); he was to be vigilant against the approach of any testing time (Matt. xxvi. 41); he was not to be like "those on the rock . . . who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Luke viii. 13). Jesus knew that we need struggle to become what we ought to be—what He wants us to be.

A recent experiment, reported by an

eminent naturalist, may well serve to give emphasis to the Christian's need,—to his necessity for conflict. This naturalist, as he tells us, was studying a cocoon, in which a butterfly was struggling to be free. He heard it beating against the sides of its little prison, and his heart went out in pity for the helpless creature. Taking a tiny lancet he cut away the fragile walls and released the little captive. But to his amazement, and disappointment too, it was not the beautiful creature he had expected to see. It lay struggling upon the table, unable to walk, unable to fly, a helpless, uncomely object. In place of the gorgeously colored wings that he had expected to see, were weak shriveled members. What was the matter with this creature that should have been so fair? The prison gates had been opened too soon; the obstacle had been removed before the struggler had developed sufficiently through struggling to be ready for its glorious flight into the

sunshiny skies and among the perfumed flowers. Just so, is it not true of us, when the walls seem to close around us, when we struggle and agonize to be free, when God refuses to cut away the barriers, to remove our temptations,—is it not because in His infinite wisdom He sees that we are weak, and He wants us to become strong? Then at last, when the struggle is finished, like the butterfly, we may come forth—not, perhaps, in the glorious robes of splendid colors of the butterfly nature, but in the everlasting robes of a righteousness which God can approve.

*Conditions of Victory*

If, then, as Christians we must meet temptations, what are some of the conditions of victory? The very first condition is heart consecration—the being wholly and loyally Christ's. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"

(John xiv. 21); "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John xv. 14). It is also true that if we do love Him it will incline us to keep His commandments, and to every manner of faithfulness to Him. It is not difficult for a bridegroom to be faithful to his bride if he has given himself wholly, loyally and lovingly to her. Temptation is disarmed by his consecration to her and to her alone. So Satan may be very strong, but he loses his power over us when we are sanctified wholly to Christ.

How shall we know temptation when it comes? There is a sure way—by companionship with Christ. A young man of intemperate habits was converted. A former associate met him and asked him into a saloon to have a drink. He said, "I cannot; I have a friend with me." "Oh, that is all right; bring your friend with you," said the man. "No," said he, "the Lord Jesus Christ is my Friend, and He will not go into a saloon and



does not wish me to go.” This is the real test. Imagine Jesus with you, your Friend at your side, His eyes upon you—would you do the thing? This is no imagination. It is reality. He is by our side. His eyes do see, His ears do hear, and His heart really cares. How shall we meet temptation when we know it? In the same way, by quickly realizing our relationship with Christ, that He loves us, that His honor is wrapped up in us, that His confidence is fixed upon us. Love to Jesus is the secret of victory. He sent word to the members of the church at Ephesus that the reason back of their defeat was that they had left their “first love” (Rev. ii. 4). He told the apostles on the night in which He was betrayed that to abide in Him was the secret of joy and of fruit-bearing (John xv. 4, 6, 10), and well do we know that victory over sin is one of the best fruits of the Christian life. Love to Christ is a royal strategy. By strategy is the way

some armies succeed in war. It is one way the Christian can succeed in the conflict with sin. Paul gives a hint of what this means when he says, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. xii. 21). It is possible to have our hearts so engrossed with the love of Christ and our hands so occupied with His service that Satan can find no place in us.

Mr. Moody once held a glass before an audience and asked: "How can I get the air out of this glass?" No one answered. He turned and from a pitcher poured the glass to overflowing with water. "Now," said he, "the air is all out." Just so can we keep Satan and the world and worldly things out of our hearts. It is by filling them with the things of Christ and of the Spirit. This is wise strategy. It is dispossession by preoccupation. It is a most successful way of overcoming sin and Satan and all evil.

“ Hang this upon the wall of your room,” said a wise picture dealer to an Oxford undergraduate, as he handed him an engraving of a Madonna of Raphael, “ and then all the pictures of jockeys and ballet girls will disappear.” Let us try the same experiment with our souls. Let their walls be hung with the things that are noble and beautiful and pure, and the foul and fleshly will seem revolting. Let us occupy our hearts with the love of Jesus and the love of the things He loves and evil will not find place in us.

### *Avoidance*

Another wise precaution in the conflict with evil is for us to avoid temptations not in the path of duty. Jesus taught us to pray, “ Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one ” (Matt. vi. 13). Let us not expose ourselves to unnecessary temptations.

A man professed conversion. His be-

setting sin had been drunkenness. But upon claiming to be converted he said he would prove the genuineness of his change of heart by going to the city, passing by all the saloons, and coming home as sober as he went. It can be no surprise to any one to know that, having gone in that spirit, he came back as drunk as ever. He met needless temptation, and not in the way of his duty. We need to pray the Lord to keep us from presumptuous sins, and help us carefully to avoid all temptations not in the way of duty.

Lord Macaulay tells us that at the siege of Namur, while the conflict was raging, William, Prince of Orange, who was giving his orders under a shower of bullets, saw with surprise and anger among his staff-officers Michael Godfrey, the deputy governor of the Bank of England. He had come to the king's headquarters on business, and was curious to see real war. "Mr. Godfrey," said

King William, "You ought not to run these hazards. You are not a soldier; you can be of no use to us here." "Sir," answered Godfrey, "I run no more risk than Your Majesty," "Not so," said William, "I am where it is my duty to be, and I may without presumption commit my life to God's keeping; but you—" Before the sentence was finished a cannon-ball laid Godfrey dead at the king's feet. The king's words were true, and the truth they conveyed is just as applicable to temptations and spiritual dangers as to the perils of war. Where duty calls us we may go, relying upon God for His protection, but to venture unnecessarily into temptation is certainly a presumptuous sin. Jesus allowed His followers the principle of avoidance when it can honorably be applied (Matt. x. 23).

*No Compromise*

It is all-important also that we make

no compromises with evil. We must be out and out on the side of Jesus, with Him and for Him all the time. Compromises are always dangerous. Because it was cold the camel asked the Arab to let him put his head into the tent. Being permitted he was soon in with his fore feet, and then with his whole body. "Hold!" cried the Arab, "there is not room enough for us both!" "Then," said the camel, "you had better get out!" That is the way it always ends. Compromises are exceedingly dangerous.

But after all care and caution, after all that can be done to avoid all unnecessary testings, temptations will come—temptations strong and terrible. What then? Why, then is the time most especially to watch, and fight and pray. Watch; let no man deceive you. We are not to think of Satan as our only foe. There are satanic men who oppose all that is good, and Jesus warned us against them too. He definitely told His disciples,

“ Take heed that no man lead you astray ” (Matt. xxiv. 4). He plainly implied that there would be men of such satanic dispositions that they would take delight in causing feeble, young and newly enlisted Christians to stumble, at the same time pronouncing unutterable woe on the men by whom such occasion should be given (Matt. xviii. 6, 7). He said distinctly that there should come false prophets, “ wolves in sheep’s clothing,” who should teach false doctrines, and offer false leadership, and try by all means to draw His people astray (Matt. vii. 15; Mark xiii. 22, 23). His warnings against evil men were frequent. Indeed, one of His very last messages, that to the members of the church in Philadelphia, was against treacherous and crafty men: “ Hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown ” (Rev. iii. 11). Watch against evil men. Watch against Satan. “ How can one enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil

his goods, except he first bind the strong man?" (Matt. xii. 29). Watch; be vigilant; keep the citadel, guard every avenue by which the enemy can make his approach. And fight. Offer absolutely unwavering resistance. Men and devils may tempt, but men and devils cannot force us to yield. Luther used to say: "We cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can prevent them from building their nests in our hair." We cannot prevent temptations from whispering in our ears, but we certainly can prevent them from making their nests in our hearts. No one can compel us to sin, and it is possible to come out of the fiercest struggle with evil with clean hands and untarnished spirit and consciences void of offence toward God and toward men. Watch, and fight. Resist. Wield the "sword of the Spirit," the word of God, as did Jesus when Satan tempted Him (Luke iv. 8, 12). Fight the good fight of faith. Lay



hold on eternal life. And pray. Do not forget to pray. Fight as if all depended upon you. Pray as if all depended upon God.

“ Watch and fight and pray,  
The battle ne'er give o'er ;  
Renew it boldly every day,  
And help Divine implore.”

“ Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love Him ” (James i. 12). Is it not significant, as well as exceedingly inspiring, that among the very last messages of Jesus to men there should be found such a series of happy promises “ To him that overcometh ” ? Those who overcome shall eat of the hidden manna (Rev. ii. 17), eat of the tree of life (ii. 7), be arrayed in white garments (iii. 5), be pillars in the temple of God (iii. 12), sit with Christ in His throne (iii. 21), have a

white stone, and in it a new name written (ii. 17), have authority over the nations (ii. 26), have the name of God written upon them by Christ (iii. 12), have the morning star (ii. 28), be confessed by Jesus before God the Father (iii. 5), be not hurt of the second death (ii. 11), and shall not have their name blotted out of the Book of Life (iii. 5).

## CHAPTER V

### *Its Maintenance*

**T**HE Christian life does not begin full grown, strong and perfect. It begins in small ways and grows as we know more about Christ and learn the lessons of experience. After the new birth we are but as little children. We are beginners. We are learners. Never in this world do we attain to absolute perfection ; yet we should always strive to be perfect, keeping ever before us the sinless life of Jesus as our example.

But while the Christian life begins in a feeble way we must make sure that it

does not stay feeble. I saw in a child's book not long since the question: "What is the largest room in the world?" The answer was given: "Room for improvement." Every one making an earnest start in the Christian life soon becomes conscious that a large degree of improvement is necessary before his character makes anything near an approach to what it ought to be. The law of the individual Christian life, as well as of His kingdom, as announced by Jesus, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear" (Mark iv. 26-29), is growth. We should never be content with mere beginnings, but should ever strive to reach maturity and perfection.

#### *Use of Means*

Ordinarily, in His works of providence, God acts through means. It is not strange, therefore, that there should be means of grace, and that our growth in the Christian life should depend on our

diligent use of them. It is thus that Christ maintains and develops His life in us.

Of course the very first condition of maintenance of and growth in the Christian life is to be vitally connected with Christ. We cannot grow unless we are alive. "He that hath the Son hath the life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (I. John v. 12). It matters not how favorable our environment, if we have not spiritual life in the Son we cannot grow.

### *Abide in Christ*

But having this life begun in us, how is it to be maintained and increased? Jesus Himself tells us the first condition. It is that of abiding in Him. "Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I

in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered" (John xv. 4-7). Jesus here compares Himself to a vine, and His disciples to branches in the vine. Some branches continued in the vine, that is, remained in living union with the vine, so that the sap or life of the vine constantly flowed into them. They had no independent life of their own. Everything in them was simply the outcome of the life of the vine flowing into them. Their buds, their leaves, their blossoms, their fruit, were really not theirs, but the buds and leaves and blossoms and fruit of the vine. Other branches were completely severed from the vine, or else the flow of sap or life of the vine into them was in some way hindered.

The plain teaching of Jesus then is this, that to abide in Him is to renounce all life independent of Him, and look to

Him for the inflow of His life into us, and the outworking of His life through us. It means the giving up of self-life—utterly renouncing every thought, purpose, desire and affection of our own and just looking day by day and hour by hour for Jesus to form His thoughts, His purposes, His desires, His affections in us. This is at least the privilege of all Christians and is the way to the maintenance of the Christian life in its happiest and fullest measure.

*Abide in His Love*

In two verses following those just quoted Jesus changes from the figure of the vine to the fact of a personal relation between Himself and His disciples, as between friend and friend. He bids them abide in His love. He says, "As the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my

Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John xv. 9-11). Plants grow in the sunshine. The love of Christ is the sunshine of the soul. To grow in the Christian life we must keep as much as possible out under the clear shining of the glorious "Sun of Righteousness." Spiritual health and beauty and happiness and serviceableness are the sure results.

### *Prayer*

One of the most important means for the maintenance of the life which we are considering is prayer, and upon this Jesus laid strong and often recurring emphasis. He Himself set us an example of a prayerful life. When He was baptized, entering upon His public ministry, He prayed, and the heavens opened in response (Luke iii. 21, 22). Before He chose His twelve apostles He continued all night in prayer (Luke vi. 12, 13). He prayed in the mountains (Matt. xiv. 23; Mark vi. 46; Luke ix.



28), in the wilderness (Luke v. 16), before day (Mark i. 35), in distress (John xii. 27), in behalf of Peter (Luke xxii. 31, 32), for the Comforter (John xiv. 16), in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 36; Mark xiv. 32; Luke xxii. 45), after the supper (John xvii.), and on many other recorded occasions. If Jesus needed this intercourse and communion with the Father to fit Him for and support Him in His work, how much more do His disciples!

*Taught Us to Pray*

He also taught us to pray, and gave us that wonderful model of prayer in the so-called Lord's Prayer (Matt. vi. 9-13). At the same time He taught the duty and privilege of closet prayer (Matt. vi. 5-8), assuring us that God both hears and answers. He taught us the importance of prayer (Luke xi. 5-8), constancy in prayer (Matt. xxvi. 41), importunity in prayer (Luke xviii. 2-5), and assured us over and over again that by asking we

shall surely receive (Matt. vii. 7-11 ; Luke xi. 9-13 ; John xiv. 13 ; xvi. 23). Prayer is an especial means of grace because of its effect upon us, for nothing can so tend to make one holy as communion with God Himself ; and because also of its power with God, as revealed in Jesus' own words. If prayer did not have this power with God, it would lose its power in us ; for no benefit could come from communion with a God who encouraged petition though knowing it to be an empty form. But our assurance is founded upon Jesus' definite and oft repeated statements that God can answer our prayers and do the things we ask Him to do ; also that He will do so, for which He has made many clear and certain promises. The fact, too, that He is our Father, and has all power, is assurance enough that He not only can but will hear our requests and do for us the things we ask Him to do, so far as they will be for our good and for His glory.

*Our Vital Breath*

Well has prayer been spoken of as the Christian's vital breath. We cannot live without breathing. We cannot maintain the spiritual life without prayer. In prayer we find help for all weakness, light for all darkness, comfort in all sorrow, friendship in all heart-hunger. If we know how to get help in prayer, we need never fail at any point in life ; for then all God's might of love is ever back of our weakness, as the great ocean is back of the little bay.

*Bible Nourishment*

If to keep in the sunshine of God's love and to breathe the pure air of prayer are helps to maintain and beautify the Christian life, then why may we not use another analogy and consider how important it is that we eat good food? Bible-fed Christians are strong Christians, vigorous, active, growing. Those who neglect the Bible are weak and sickly,

discontented and inefficient. Jesus' teachings concerning the use of the Scriptures are as definite, as urgent, and equally frequent with those concerning prayer. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4). "Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" (John v. 39). "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke xi. 28). He says that we are "made clean" through the word (John xv. 3), that the truth "makes us free" (John viii. 32), that "the seed is the word of God" which if sown in the heart and "held fast" will bring forth an abundant and blessed harvest (Luke viii. 5-15). He used the Scriptures Himself and quoted constantly from them, the occasions being too numerous to mention here. In His prayer after establishing the Lord's Supper one of the things He

said of the disciples, speaking gratefully to the Father, was, "I have given them Thy Word" (John xvii. 14). He Himself used God's word in overcoming Satan (Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10; Luke iv. 4, 8, 12). It is certainly an indispensable help in the Christian life. If in prayer we talk to God, then in the Bible God speaks to us. The first disciples heard the words of divine truth as they dropped directly from the lips of Jesus. They could bring their questions right to Him and He would answer them. They could ask Him what He wanted them to do, and He would tell them. When they were in sorrow, the words of comfort fell warm and tender from the very lips of Jesus. One of His friends sat at His feet and listened reverently and lovingly to His instructions. Another leaned his head on Jesus' bosom, whispering his confidential questions and receiving answers. An inquirer came to Him by night and had a long talk with Him about the way to be

saved. Those were certainly wonderful days when God Himself, in the person of His Son, was here on the earth in human form, speaking in the actual tones of human speech the words of life and answering men's questions with His own lips.

### *The Divine Voice*

That day is past; for we cannot any more hear the Divine Voice as men heard it then. Yet God is not silent. He still speaks. We can still bring our questions and He will answer them. We can still sit at Jesus' feet and hear His words. We can still rest our heads on His bosom in our sorrow and listen to His assurances of love. We can still ask Him how to be saved, and get a plain, clear answer. God now speaks to us in His written word. Oh, how we ought to rejoice in it; how we ought to read it, and love it, and use it! God's love-letter to us! How it should quicken the heart-throbs and fill our souls with rapture and with

fresh and holy resolve! The word of God is meant to be a means of grace, that is, a definite means and help in living the Christian life and in reaching forward to the highest Christian attainment. The Bible contains precisely the spiritual nourishment needed for the Christian life in all its stages.

### *The Church*

Another important means of spiritual nourishment is the Church, with its sacraments and services. No one can have the highest success in the Christian life without the fellowship of other believers. The Church is a Divine institution, built by Jesus Himself. It is the one institution that abides. Other institutions come and go; they do their work for their day and disappear; but the Church will continue to the end. "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi. 18). This is Jesus' own promise. The Church is made up of men and women,

imperfect men and women, and consequently it is an imperfect institution ; but none the less it is of Divine origin and God loves it, and every believer should realize that he belongs to it and should openly take his place in it and bear his responsibilities regarding it. Besides, we need the Church as a spiritual home, where we find spiritual companionship, where our interests centre, where our hearts are fixed, where our souls are fed. Our souls need the Church and its ordinances as our bodies need bread ; and the Christian who willingly neglects the spiritual nourishment and inspiration thus to be obtained must inevitably become weak in faith, cold in love and sickly in soul. We need the Church as a place in which to grow spiritually strong.

### *Jesus' Example and Teaching*

Here again we have both the example and teachings of Jesus. In connection with one of His visits to Nazareth we are



told that He entered "as His custom was, into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke iv. 16). He gave special promises also to those who should unite in the services of God's worship. He said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 19), thus implying that as added strands make the cable stronger, so added hearts in prayer make the supplication more availing. He also gave a definite promise of His own presence where even two or three of His disciples shall meet in His name (Matt. xviii. 20). It was when His disciples were "all together in one place" that He poured out the Holy Spirit upon them on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 1, 2). He not only established the Church, gave and fulfilled promises to it, but He also instituted its sacraments. These are baptism and the Lord's Supper, holy ordinances instituted by Himself, "wherein,

by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed and applied to believers." At the same time He instituted baptism He commanded preaching and teaching. He said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 18-20). He instituted also, as already noted, the Lord's Supper (Matt. xxvi. 26-28; Luke xxii. 19, 20; I. Cor. xi. 24, 25), and commanded its observance, saying, "This do in remembrance of me." These and all the ordinances of the Church, with Christian worship and fellowship, are intended of God to be means of spiritual nourishment and growth in grace to His people. They are intended

also for the strengthening and preparing of His people for the carrying of His Gospel to others.

### *Work*

This means work, exercise ; which certainly is as essential for the maintenance of the Christian life as is breathing pure air or eating good food. Jesus was a worker—"My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John v. 17)—and He wants us to work. We grow in knowledge by activity. "If any man willet to do His will he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John vii. 17). Doing is a mode of study. We also grow in power by activity. As our bodies are developed and strengthened by exercise so are our souls by Christian work. Shut up a horse in a stable for months without exercise and it will surely die. An English physician told his rich invalid patient : "Go to work ; live on a shilling a day

*and earn it!*” He knew that the man’s main need was exercise. So in spiritual things. There is nothing like exercise to keep people warm and well. The wise physician of souls might well prescribe for many sick Christians the exercise cure. He is wise that seeks to save souls. He is wise for his own sake as well as for others’ sake. Like the Alpine traveller who attempted to rescue his freezing friend, we find that saving others is saving ourselves. Warmth and new life came to the rescuer in the act of carrying the other to a place of safety. Warmth and health and blessedness come to us as Christians in the act of putting forth efforts for others.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Its Joyful Experiences*

**T**HERE are those who will have it that personal religion narrows the soul and contracts the life. They say that religion's pleasures are few, its prohibitions innumerable and fixed, with nothing to do but repeat in each sensitive ear its "Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not," with the discord of a perpetual command. Even good people are sometimes misled into the thought that life is in some way narrowed down and circumscribed by religion; while many who are not

Christians are deterred from ever becoming such by this same misunderstanding, or misconception. But the system of faith and practice which Jesus came to proclaim admits of no such moroseness, severity, or gloomy views; on the contrary, it proposes to bring in as its own free gift a new and increased experience of every kind that renders life valuable, worthy and worth living. So it is that when we urge religion upon any one and the spoken or unspoken excuse is, "Oh, but I want to see more of life first," the Gospel, as if anticipating the objection, or rebuking the one who utters it, answers, "Very well, but you are making a great mistake, for the Redeemer came that you may have life, and that you may have it abundantly." In other words, this is the doctrine of Jesus, that the devoted Christian life is a fuller life, a freer life, a brighter, more welcome, more joyous, more abounding life than any other life whatsoever.

*Enrichment of Life*

Why, some people live as much in ten years as others would in fifty. Under certain conditions life is wonderfully enriched. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay." Jesus gives those connected by faith with Him an added capacity for life, an added talent for life, an added amount of life ; so that a Christian actually lives more in the same length of time than one who is not a Christian.

His blessing for His people is not that they may simply have life, but that they may have it abundantly. This is what He Himself said. It was in connection with that pearl of parables, the Good Shepherd, in the tenth chapter of John. He was telling why He left the throne for the manger and the cross, and adds, as expressing the very climax of His mission : "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John x. 10).

He gives this abundant life in many

ways, among which are these,—by enlarging the capacity of the soul, by multiplying the resources of the soul, and by quickening the susceptibilities of the soul.

### *Enlarged Capacity*

Not long ago I made the acquaintance of a young girl who is nearsighted. Until she was nearly eight years of age neither she nor her parents realized her lack. But finding that she had difficulty in studying at school they took her to an oculist who furnished her with suitable glasses. When she put them on and looked about, she exclaimed: "Why, Mamma, I can see the grass, that it has separate blades, and the trees, that they have separate leaves. I could never see so before, for they always appeared like one mass of green." We know the secret. She could see more and better simply because her capacity for seeing was enlarged. Just so it is with religion in the soul, it enlarges its capacity. Be-



fore, the eyes of the understanding were darkened, and there was blindness in the heart. Now, the whole being is brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. There are beauties the unregenerate heart can never see. There are joys it can never know. "And Elisha prayed, and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (II. Kings vi. 17). Just so with us is the opening of our spiritual vision but a superadded capacity to see. To the renewed soul it becomes actually true that the whole landscape of life, its mountains and its valleys, are filled with the horses and chariots of God's hitherto unseen power and protecting care and manifestations of love.

In innumerable ways the Christian has the advantage over one who is not a

Christian. His field of vision is wider and more far-reaching, because it takes in things spiritual and therefore eternal. His cup of blessing is not only fuller, but it holds more. While others may have real earthly joys, Jesus' follower has these and the joys of the Christian added. Not only can he say, "My cup runneth over," but he can add, "My heart hast Thou enlarged."

### *Spiritual Verities*

The abundant life of the Christian, then, is the fulness of a rich experience of spiritual verities. Xerxes of old offered a prize for the invention of a new pleasure, but no pleasuring of the worldling can for one moment compare in richness of joy with the ecstasy of that soul into which is poured the fulness of a consecrating love. As the Christian's joy exceeds that of the worldling so does it also exceed that of the follower of any false religion. Jesus spoke not only of

the abundant life of His followers, but also of their liberty. He said, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John viii. 36). While false religions have a tendency to limit, degenerate, degrade, enslave and destroy men, true religion is designed and adapted to give to men more abundant life, higher freedom, truer liberty, better manhood, in time, and for eternity. It is profitable both for the life that now is and for that which is to come.

In the verse quoted, where Jesus speaks of His people as having life and having it abundantly, it should be noticed that the "it" is italicized, which means that it is not in the original. The literal translation of the Greek is in the margin of the Revised Version, "have abundance." The statement is that Jesus came that His sheep, His followers, might not only have life in its fulness, exuberance of life, but all things added to it which will make it

supremely happy both now and hereafter.

*Religion's Pleasant Ways*

It is not religion, but the lack of it that makes people unhappy. Yet how strangely and how widely the opposite view prevails. There are many who think of religion not only as a galling drudgery, but as the surest source of moroseness, melancholy and unhappiness of life. Their idea is that religion is a system of suffering to which many people are willing to submit here in order that they may not suffer hereafter,—that religion's only happiness is in the future, its rewards after death. Instead, the real fact is that religion as Jesus taught it is a thing of present joy and of ever continuing blessedness. It is the gladdest, sweetest, happiest thing in all this world. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. iii. 17). It is religion that gives us the brightest things

in life and sin the dark things, not *vice versa*. Religion goes down to the deepest springs of our mental, moral and spiritual well-being. It brings untold measures of peace and joy. It takes the sting out of the past. It takes the worry out of the present. It takes the fear out of the future.

The calling of Jesus is always an upward calling. He never calls us from larger things to smaller. He never calls us to shrunken conditions. He calls us for our welfare, for our enlargement, for power, for benediction. He is always calling "Up! Up! Up!" to His followers. Blessed is the man that answers when the call upward and onward comes.

### *Blessedness*

It was the sneer of an early skeptic that Christianity is the religion of the sorrowful. No, he was an enemy of Christianity, and most deeply mistaken. Instead, Christianity is the religion of

the joyful. No one who makes even a little study of the teachings of Jesus can fail of being impressed with the frequency of His references to and the emphasis He laid upon the fact of the blessedness of the Christian life. The first utterances of His wonderful Sermon on the Mount were a series of "Blesseds" whose depth of meaning no one can over-state (Matt. v. 3-12). Over and over again He said to His disciples, "Be of good cheer" (Matt. xiv. 27; Mark vi. 50; John xvi. 33). He told how He gives to His followers the water of life, which not only quenches soul-thirst for the time, but also becomes "in" them "a well of water springing up into eternal life" (John iv. 14), a constant source of life and strength and satisfaction and joy.

#### *The Well in the Foundations*

In the ruins of nearly all the old feudal castles of England one may find

somewhere, deep sunk in the foundations, a rubbish-filled well. What does this mean? It means that the owner of the castle always had in the heart of his citadel a pure, never-failing supply of water upon which to depend in case he was besieged by an enemy. He would never have to go outside his fortress to get that chief necessity of life. So is it with the soul that has dugged a place deep within itself for the presence of Christ to enter and fill. That is the well in the foundations of life. Not to have to go outside one's self for the water of life—that is the secret of peace and courage and joy. The enemy may camp round about us, may cut us off from outside help and resource, but so long as we have the supply of Divine help and comfort within, we can bid him defiance. How many lives have gone down before the power of evil because they had no well of Divine strength and comfort deep within them-

selves. They could resist for a brief season, perhaps, but after that their resources were spent. No soul can conquer evil unless it has the indwelling Christ to sustain it. All its moral strength, all its proud determination, are only like so many shallow tubs and pails of water that have been hurriedly brought within the fortress. A few days' siege exhausts them, and then it must yield; there is no other way.

But how different the condition and reliance of the Christian. Oh, the blessedness of the man who has the well of living water deep down in the foundations of his being, fed by the springs of Divine love! With God in his soul he cannot be overcome. Every day the pure, life-giving flow brings him fresh strength and courage and hope. Christ is the well in the foundations. It is the privilege of every Christian to drink from Him. He is both the Spring and the Giver of its life-giving flow. He



invites us to drink, to drink freely, and says of each one who participates, "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life." "Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John vi. 35). "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37, 38).

### *Peace*

But the teaching of Jesus makes plain that the blessedness of the Christian contains other elements besides abounding life and spiritual health. He had much to say also regarding the peace His followers should enjoy. This was one of the richest and sweetest legacies

He left His disciples. He said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). And it is a special kind or quality of peace He here promised. The emphasis is upon the word "My." "*My* peace I give unto you." The peace Christ gives! It is the same deep, abiding, blessed peace He enjoyed. The peace Jesus had and gives is something different from what the world calls peace. It is not the peace of affluence, nor the peace of tranquillity, nor the peace of congenial surroundings. These may or may not accompany peace. The peace Jesus had was something deeper and worthier. Sin is war. Sin is strife. Sin puts discord into our lives. Conscious of sin we cannot be at peace. But Jesus' peace was the peace of sinlessness. In the midst of all His press of work and the disturbances that surrounded Him He had the peace of conscious integrity, the peace of oneness with His

Father—the peace of sinlessness. This is one element of the peace He gives us. He gives us the peace of pardon (Luke vii. 47–50), the peace of justification, (John iii. 18). Through our acceptance of His righteousness He gives us the peace of an imputed sinlessness. He makes us free from sin and to enjoy the deep and abiding peace of one accounted just before God. He gives us also peace of character. He had the peace of a sound, stable, right-centred character, in which there was no internal discord or struggle. It is a great thing to possess a right-centred, unified character. We do not easily attain unto it. Too often we approve the right but do the wrong. We are dual characters, torn by conflicts within. But Jesus' peace was that of confirmed character, sound, stable, unified. This is the peace He gives His disciples as fast and as fully as they will accept it; and it is one of His greatest gifts. Then, too, He gives

the peace of abiding trustfulness. This peace, also, Jesus had. How often we hear Him exclaiming, "My Father," and showing the utmost confidence in His wish and will. It is this peace, also, He gives us when He says, "My peace I give unto you," enabling us truly to exclaim, "I worship thee, sweet will of God," and say, "In His will is my peace." (Cf. John xvi. 33; Luke vii. 47; Luke viii. 48.)

#### *The Father's Care*

The teachings of Jesus warrant us also to joy greatly in the thought of our Father's loving protection and care. Over and over again He assures us that our Heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of (Matt. vi. 8, 32; Luke xii. 22), rebukes fear in us (Matt. viii. 26), and tells of the uselessness and unwisdom of any anxious thought (Matt. vi. 24-34; x. 19, 29-31; Luke xii. 6, 7, 24-28). He tells us not only of our temporal wel-

fare, but also of our eternal security in God. He tells how the sincere Christian is like one "who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock" (Luke vi. 47-49). He says that He is the Good Shepherd, the One on whom His people depend, and adds, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John x. 27-29).

*Joy Unspeakable*

No wonder the Christian has joy. No wonder the Apostle Peter could exclaim, "Believing, ye rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I. Pet. i. 8). Believing, *we* rejoice. In other words, faith produces joy. The relation is that of inseparability, of cause and

effect. The believing is the cause of the rejoicing. Faith brings gladness. Trusting brings happiness. Let us not fail to notice also the nature of the joy faith produces. It is "unspeakable." That is, it is unspeakably great. It is also in its nature not a noisy, but "a deep and silent thing." In this sense, too, it is "unspeakable." And that is the reason, we doubt not, why it is so often mistaken for the opposite. Because it is calm and sometimes even grave, the world thinks it severe. But, as has been said, "The gods approve the depth and not the tumult of the soul." Joy may be a very quiet thing, a "calm rapture," as Jonathan Edwards once defined it. There may be nothing boisterous, tumultuous, hilarious about it. It is "joy unspeakable"; not a thing to be talked about, but to be felt. But it is also joy "glorified." True Christian joy is glorified joy. That is, it has the glory of heaven shining upon it, filling, suffusing, transfiguring,

intensifying it. In other words, there is no other joy anything like so rich, so deep, so full, so blessed as this joy which comes with religion, which springs out of faith.

*Love a Joyous Affection*

There is another step in the production of joy out of faith that must not be overlooked. Faith is the cause of love and love is the cause of joy. Faith is to the soul what the eye is to the body. It is the power of seeing. It is a cognition, or spiritual apprehension. It is not merely light, but discernment. It sees not the object merely, but its excellence also. It produces congeniality, or sympathy, a feeling of actual interest and delight. It also appropriates, gives us the consciousness that in some sense the object is ours. This is the way in which faith in Jesus produces love to Jesus. It is the faculty by which we apprehend, approve and appropriate Him. Having come thus to love Him, joy is the fruit

of love. Love is in itself a joyous affection. It is in its nature happy. God is love; all the blessed love and are blest by the fact that they love.

### *Intimacy with Jesus*

Christians have the joy, too, of intimacy with Jesus, the joy of loving Him and of possessing His love. They hear Him saying to them, "Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love" (John xv. 9). They know that He wants them to be happy in His love, for He adds, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full" (John xv. 11). They are assured of His welcome to intimacy, for they hear Him saying, "I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you" (John xv. 15). It might be objected that these words were for His apostles alone, but He said they



were not for them alone, but for all in all ages who should believe on Him (John xvii. 20). The joy of companionship with Jesus—this is the privilege of every Christian. He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. xi. 28). The rest is that blessed rest of fellowship, of companionship with Him. How close the relationship into which He takes us; for again we hear Him saying, “Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt. xii. 48–50). He says that to all who love Him He will manifest Himself, make Himself known, in a way that He does not, even cannot do unto the world (John xiv. 21–26; *cf.* Mark iv. 11, 12).

*Religion a Joyous Experience*

Nothing can be more certain than that Jesus’ teachings concerning the

Christian life present it, and were intended to present it, as a thing of deep and abounding joy. He meant us to know that religion in itself is a joyous experience; and such Christians in all ages have found it to be. Religion is the normal attitude and exercise of the spiritual nature. It is spiritual health. As it is a joy to be able to see and to hear the beautiful things in the natural world, so it is immeasurably a greater joy to be able to hear and to see the glad and beautiful things in the kingdom of God. Religion is immeasurably more than the means of securing future happiness. It is that, but it is also happiness and well-being now and here, and all the way along, until one comes into the full and perfect enjoyment of the bliss of heaven. Jesus did tell us of heaven to come; He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions;" "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2); but He also made it very plain that we do not have to wait till after we die

for heaven to begin with us. Said He, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 20, 21). It is a present heaven the Christian enjoys, an inner heaven in the heart. We do not have to wait until we die to taste the joys of bliss. It was said of a pious old Puritan that "heaven was in him before he was in heaven." A Scotchman being asked if he ever expected to go to heaven, gave the quaint reply, "Why, mon, I live there." When Edward Payson was dying he said, "If I had known twenty-five years ago what I know now I might have walked in the light of the New Jerusalem all these years." He had just entered the Beulah Land experience. Many do not enter because, like him, they think that is only to be obtained after death. But it is the same heaven in both worlds. The only difference is one of degree. Jesus nowhere teaches that those who put their trust in Him shall merely come into a state of eternal life by and by. No, what

He says is this: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (John iii. 36). In a true and deep sense all who believe have already entered upon the Eternal State. They have stepped across the frontier life into the glorious state of being in which the changes of this mortal existence cannot affect the permanence of their life of blessedness. "Lay hold on eternal life!" It is something for us to get hold of now. It is a thing of the future, but it is a thing of the present too, and even the part of it which is future can be so realized and grasped by faith as to be actually enjoyed while here. The Christian life is a joyous experience. All the way to heaven is heaven.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Its Sufferings and Trials*

**N**OBODY loves suffering for its own sake. There is nothing winsome about pain. It hurts; and when it is analyzed it bears so many marks of its origin in sin that there is nothing lovely about it.

The Christian is not immune. Some sorts of suffering he escapes, most certainly, but in the world he has tribulations of many kinds.

Jesus, certainly, never taught that the Christian life is a life free from suffering

and trial, or invited men to follow Him in order to be exempt from troubles. He made no such appeal to men's selfishness. On the contrary, He told them plainly that sufferings and trials are sure to come to those who would be His disciples, and some of these definitely on His own account, as the distinct result of becoming His followers.

The difference between the Christian and the unbeliever is in the use and effect of trial on the life. To him who has no faith in Christ the world's burdens are not only an unmixed but also an unavoidable evil. He cannot flee from them or put them on others; they have no meaning of good for him. The Christian, on the other hand, finds all his experiences eloquent of God and of good. He believes that to him all things work together for good. He considers every fact of life as controlled by the Father, who loves him, and as containing a message of love.

*Suffering as a Christian*

But, as we have said, Jesus made no promise to His people of freedom from trial and trouble. The apostle Peter exclaimed, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed" (I. Pet. iv. 16), and Paul distinctly reproved those who compromised with conscience "only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ" (Gal. vi. 12). Some do suffer definitely as Christians—especially because they are Christians—suffer persecution for the cross of Christ; and Jesus did not hide from any that this might be. Indeed, He told men distinctly that they would be wise to count the cost of following Him at all. Over and over again He said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark viii. 34; Matt. x. 38; xvi. 24; Luke ix. 23; xiv. 27; *cf.* Mark x. 21). He said, "Ye shall be hated of all men

for my name's sake" (Matt. x. 22). He said, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his Lord" (vs. 24). He said, "If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household!" (vs. 25). He charged His disciples and us all, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (vs. 28). He said, "Love your enemies" (Matt. v. 44). Then, Christians have enemies. He said, "Pray for them that persecute you" (vs. 44). Then Christians are liable to have those who will persecute and despitefully use them. He intimated, too, that men would have more quiet ways, and yet ways just as effective, of bringing suffering to His people. He said that sometimes His disciples should be ostracised, "They shall separate you from their company" (Luke vi. 22); often they should be reproached and falsely accused (Matt. v. 11); frequently misunderstood, and their



motives misinterpreted (Matt. v. 10; Luke vi. 22). He told them not to be surprised when poverty was their lot, saying, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Luke ix. 58).

Then, too, He spoke of the chastisement which Christians must bear, and the pruning in order that they may be fruitful (John xv. 1, 2). Christians also sometimes wet their beds with tears because of having left their first love (Rev. ii. 4), or from having backslidden into sin, or from their sorrow in seeing so much sin in the world. Then, too, there are such common ills to which they are subject as the loss of property, the alienation of friends, and the death of those who are near and dear to them. It is scarcely necessary even to try to make a catalogue of the sufferings and trials to which Christians are liable, as taught or implied by Jesus'

words. As we have said before, Jesus made no promise to any Christian of exemption from trial and trouble. Indeed, some of the greatest saints have been the greatest sufferers. Yes, possibly they have been the greatest saints because they were the greatest sufferers.

#### *Jesus' Teaching and Example*

It is just in this direction that the teachings of Jesus, and His example too, are laden with the strongest consolation. Our Lord was made perfect through suffering. He came to His throne by way of His cross—a hard way, but a glorious one. He tells us, too, that God is dealing with us as sons and that life is a school in which He is educating and training and preparing us for glory (*cf.* Matt. xxiv. 13; Luke xii. 32; John xv. 1, 2).

#### *How to Meet the Tests*

How, then, does Jesus wish us to meet suffering and trial? In calm trust

in our Heavenly Father's providence and care. He assures us that there is no chance in all this universe, and no accidents—that God's government extends to all His creatures and all their actions. He tells us that not a sparrow falls on the ground without the Father's notice, that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, and that we are of infinite value in God's sight (Matt. x. 29–31). He urges that we take no anxious thought concerning our life or its necessities, assuring us that the Heavenly Father, who feeds the fowls and clothes the lilies, will certainly care for us, His own children (Matt. vi. 25–32). He tells us that even if we are persecuted, or misunderstood, or in poverty, or even mourning over sins into which we have fallen, still we may be of good cheer for it is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, and that He will overrule all for our ultimate good.

*Our Father*

How much indeed is implied when Jesus teaches us that God is our Father! "Your Father"—"Your Heavenly Father"—"Your Father in heaven" (Matt. v. 16; vi. 26, 32; Luke xii. 30; Matt. x. 29; xviii. 14; Luke vi. 36, etc.); He uses the words over and over again. If God is our Father then He loves us, and what comfort there is in the thought of His love! God's people may not be able to understand all His dealings with them, but this they know, that they are all love-prompted and love-wrought; for "God is love." His love is strong like a father's. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so Jehovah pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. ciii. 13). His love is tender, like a mother's: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isa. lxvi. 13). God's love goes out to us continually; but just as a father or a mother shows special tenderness and heed to a sick or suffering

child, so does God deal with us when we are in trouble. What blessed results would come if everywhere, the world over, we could get people to realize this one supreme, glad fact that God is love! How it would soften the hearts of the sinning, cause all to yield who are resisting, and how it would bring cheer to the lonely, comfort to the sorrowing, strength to the weak, and fill unnumbered millions with joy and peace in believing! Besides, this love of God is absolutely unvarying, so that we can rely upon it under all possible circumstances. It is related that a certain man placed on one of his buildings a weather-vane, upon which were inscribed the words, "God is love." Some one criticised him, saying, "You have placed an immutable truth on a very changeful thing." "No; it is all right," he replied, "it means that God is love whichever way the wind blows." Yes, it is a glad fact as taught by Jesus that God's love is

a love that can be depended upon, and meets us in every condition and circumstance of life.

### *Infinite Wisdom*

But God is not only loving ; He is also infinitely wise. How much added consolation this thought gives ! His dealings are not only love prompted, but His love is guided by unerring wisdom. Jesus trusted this wisdom even in His darkest hours, and by His example taught us likewise to trust (Matt. xxvi. 39 ; Mark xiv. 36 ; Luke xxii. 42 ; *cf.* Matt. xi. 26 ; Luke x. 21). We are often like little children, in our ignorance crying for what would harm us. God is like an all-loving and wise parent who withholds the thing that would harm. A sea-captain allayed the fears of his ten-year-old daughter, on her first voyage with him, by assuring her that he would be at the helm all night long. So Jesus teaches us that our Heavenly Father is

our all-skilled Pilot, and will wisely guide. It is not for us who are passengers to meddle with helm or chart or compass. It is our privilege, as well as duty, to let our all-wise Pilot alone with His work, and trust. One so loving, so thoughtful of us, so infinitely wise ; how well we can afford to trust Him !

*Infinite Strength*

But there is another quality in God which as Jesus makes Him known crowns all these we have mentioned. He is not only loving and sympathetic and wise. One might be all these and yet not be able to deliver. A friend might be loving, sympathetic, willing to help us, and wise enough to know just what ought to be done in our case of need, and yet be absolutely unable, lacking in power to help us. Not so with God. Nothing is too hard for Him. He is infinitely strong. He can put underneath His everlasting arms and bear

us up. He is able to make all grace abound towards us. He is able to fulfill His promise to make all things work together for our good.

### *Sustaining Grace*

How wonderfully, too, God does uphold His people in time of trouble! Multitudes of Christians, looking ahead, have seen troubles approaching that they felt they never would be able to pass through; but, when the time came, sustaining grace was given. They were privileged both to rest their heads on God's great beating heart of love, and to feel that underneath were the Everlasting Arms.

A minister on his deathbed was being tended by his daughter. She was very solicitous for his comfort, and spoke of placing additional pillows under him. He said, "No, daughter, I have three pillows under me now. One is the pillow of God's love; another is the pillow



of God's wisdom ; the other is the pillow of God's sustaining strength and power." These are the pillows on which every weary, troubled, or pain-tested Christian may rest and find truest comfort and sweetest relief.

*Cloud Land*

"Did I ever mention to you," wrote E. P. Hood to a friend, "what I thought when I saw the picture of a German painter some time ago? I could not make out what he meant by it. It was called Cloud Land, and it seemed nothing but cloud upon cloud. As I looked I saw that every cloud turned into an angel or an angel's wing ; and the whole picture, which seemed at first only a mass of gloom, looked out upon me with a hundred angels' eyes. So with all clouds, if God comes nigh to us by them ; look at them and they will turn into angels. They are not desirable to us in themselves. We foolish men would walk

always in day brightness—we do not want clouds—but God knows their value, else He would never send them to us.”

This is Jesus’ teaching, that to the Christian every dispensation of Providence, however dark it may seem, is a token of God’s love. There is an angel, a messenger of grace in every cloud. God’s “*Nevertheless afterward*” is bigger than all adverse circumstances.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Its Obligation Of Service*

**W**E are saved to serve. Jesus taught that we should live “not to be ministered unto but to minister” (Matt. xx. 28). God has so ordered that we cannot love and serve Him and not also love and serve our fellow men. Jesus made this very plain in His picture of the last judgment, when He said that He is hungry in every hungry little one of His, that He is sick in every least one of His who is sick (Matt. xxv. 31-46). In serving His we are serving Him; in neglecting His we are neglecting Him. We cannot fulfill all duty by loving Christ

and serving Him, while we ignore our fellow men. He accepts no such service. If we say that we love Him, He points to the needy, the hungry, the sick, the burdened ones, the suffering, all about us, and says: "Show your love to these. I do not need service now; but these need it. Serve them in my name."

### *The Perfect Example*

It is Christlike, Godlike to serve. The spirit of service is indeed the Christly spirit. Jesus said, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" (Luke xxii. 27). He said, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John v. 17). Indeed, what an example His whole life was of this spirit of service. He took upon Him "the form of a servant." He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister." He healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, opened the eyes of the blind, cheered the disconsolate, preached the Gospel to the poor, and, at the last, on the

cruel cross, gave up His life as an unselfish surrender for the salvation of others.

*The Messages of Christ*

Then, too, many of His messages, recorded in the Gospels, convey the same obligation as did His life and example. Indeed, His teachings concerning the obligation of service are so numerous, so constant that they might be almost considered the bulk and the burden of His messages to men. A few examples must suffice, such as the parable of the pounds (Luke xix. 12-26), the parable of the talents (Matt. xxv. 14-30), the parable of the salt (Matt. v. 13), of the light (vs. 14-16), of the leaven (Matt. xiii. 33). It is the obligation of service these all teach. The same obligation He taught over and over again in plain words. He commended the giving of a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple (Matt. x. 42). He said that

greatness in His kingdom is accounted to those who both do and teach His commandments (Matt. v. 19). He said that among the heathen those were accounted great who exercised lordship over others, but added, "Not so shall it be among you : but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister ; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant" (Matt. xx. 26, 27). That is, greatness comes by serviceableness. Those are great in Christ's kingdom who are great servants (*cf.* Mark x. 42-44 ; Matt. xxiii. 11). He commended the corn of wheat which was sown, not saved, dying for the sake of fruit, and likewise He commended the man who should be willing to cast his life into the soil of service in order that it might bring forth fruit unto life eternal. He said that from the vineyard fruit was expected (Luke xiii. 6-9), and pronounced a curse on uselessness when He caused the

barren fig tree to wither away (Mark xi. 12-14).

*Christ's Commands*

Not only did He enforce the obligation of service by His example of life given for others, and by His teachings, direct and indirect, but He definitely required its recognition by repeated commands. When a man asked Him how far the duty of a neighbor extended He told the parable of the Good Samaritan. He agreed that the man who rendered help was the real neighbor, and then ended the parable with a command: "Go, and do thou likewise" (Luke x. 30-37). He said to His disciples when He appeared to them after the resurrection, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21). To the restored Peter He said, "Feed my lambs;" "Feed my sheep" (John xxi. 15-17). He told the lawyer who asked which is the great commandment, that there

are two great commandments, the first being to love God with all the heart and soul and mind, and the second, like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 35-40). To several of the disciples in the act of calling them He told them what their work was to be: "Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. iv. 18, 19; *cf.* Mark i. 16, 17). In the Golden Rule He laid down a command that we should feel the obligation to serve others as deeply as would be the appeal of our own need were we in position to require service (Matt. vii. 12; Luke vi. 31). He said to His disciples, "The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest" (Luke x. 2). But this command implied another that they were not only to pray, but also to labor in the great world harvest field. After His conversation with the Samari-



tan woman, at Jacob's Well, He said to the disciples, "Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest. He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal" (John iv. 35, 36).

*Witness-Bearing*

Then, too, there are all those commands, direct and implied, that make known to His people that they are to be witnesses for Him. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," and then added, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14). He calls us His witnesses. He tells us we are to confess Him before men (Matt. x. 32, 33), that we are to let our light shine before men, that we are to commend Him and His religion to men. He tells us we are to do this actively as well as by the silent influence of

our lives: "And ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8). Nothing could be plainer than His command to the apostles, and through them to us, until the work is done, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark xvi. 15); "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

### *Being Good*

This obligation to service, so definitely and constantly urged by Jesus, is to be met in two ways, by our being and doing. We are to be good and do good. A good life is an argument for Christianity

many years long, never misunderstood, and absolutely unanswerable. If ever there was a day when it was important for every follower of Jesus to stand fast and be true to his profession, we believe it is the present day. There is no answer to infidelity like the life of Christ displayed by the living, loving Christian. "Ye are my witnesses" was never truer than it is to-day. Nothing puts the madness of the infidel and the folly of the unbelieving more to shame and silence than the humble, quiet, consistent walk of some thorough-going, heavenly-minded, divinely-taught disciple. It is character that tells. There is wonderful power in a consistent life. Multitudes of people to-day are called upon to thank God for the force of a living Bible. There have been many who would not read God's printed Word, but to whom He sent a living Bible in the example of some devoted Christian they could not help reading.

*Living Epistles*

The atheist who spent a few days with the saintly Fenelon said: "If I stay here much longer I shall become a Christian in spite of myself." Fenelon had used no word of controversy or solicitation. It was but the quiet, convincing argument of a holy life,—a consistent walk and conversation.

"I tried to be a skeptic when I was a young man," said Cecil, "but my mother's life was too much for me."

A young minister when about to be ordained to the work of the Gospel, stated publicly that at one period of his life he was almost an infidel. "But," said he, "there was one argument in favor of Christianity I could never refute—the consistent conduct of my father."

"No, I don't know Jesus," responded a young city Arab to the abrupt question of a zealous, if not over-tactful street missionary. Then, with a sudden illumination of memory, he added, "But I

know a friend of His, and I like her.” Some good woman had done more than she knew, for the Gospel of Christ in the life of His friends is the Gospel that shall reach all nations.

Some years ago a Japanese came to Dr. Leighton Parks, in Boston, saying, “Sir, can you tell me where to find the beautiful life?” Dr. Parks learned that he had lived in a boarding-house in San Francisco with a man whose life as a Christian had been so unselfish and sunny and helpful that this Japanese had named it “the beautiful life,” and felt a yearning to possess it.

### *Force of Silent Preaching*

Let us know that a consistent life is a power anywhere. The religion that keeps the speech pure and honest, the temper sweet and kindly, the actions considerate and unselfish—such a walk and conversation is a constant telling of the

Gospel story, of the real good news to men.

“My brethren,” said an old African preacher, “a good example is the tallest kind of preaching.” And he was right.

### *Doing Good*

But the disciple of Jesus is not only to be good; he is also definitely to aim at doing good. The obligation of service laid upon him by Jesus requires him to be active and earnest and zealous. Each disciple of Christ is to “do all the good he can, to all the people he can, in all the ways he can, as long as ever he can.” It is the duty of every Christian to make his life tell just as largely and just as widely as ever he can for the advancement of the kingdom of his Master. We are to be moved to this by the fact that the command of Christ to forward His cause is binding upon every disciple (Mark xvi. 15; Acts i. 8); by the fact that as His

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religion is true we are bound to propagate it; by the fact of the need of every life for Jesus Christ; by the fact that Christ comes to souls through other souls; by the fact that it is the only work whose returns are indestructible; and by the fact that, so far as we can see, it is the only way the world can hear of Christ at all.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Its Rewards*

**J**ESUS was willing to have us think of the rewards of the Christian life or He never would have enumerated so many or mentioned them so frequently. Some say that the expectation of reward is a low motive. Jesus presented other motives, such as the duty of man, the glory of God, gratitude for blessings, and the welfare of others; but it is certain that He either appealed to our desire for reward, or announced the blessed results of right faith and conduct, constantly.



*Reward of Following*

He spoke frequently of the reward of following Him. To His disciples on more than one occasion He said, "Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father, or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, . . . and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark x. 29, 30; Matt. xix. 29). To the rich young man who, misunderstanding the nature of true righteousness, asked, "What lack I yet?" Jesus made reply: "If thou wouldst be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (Matt. xix. 20, 21; cf. Luke xviii. 29, 30). He spoke of His very attitude toward those who are His own as in some measure a reward for their enlistment with Him. He says, "No longer do I

call you servants; . . . but I have called you friends" (John xv. 15). He not only makes His people differ thus from common men, but He loves them in a peculiar way. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him" (John xiv. 21-23).

### *Reward of Serving*

Jesus spoke frequently also of the reward of serving Him. He said that the giving of a cup "of cold water only" in the name of a disciple should "in no wise lose its reward" (Matt. x. 42). When He stood by Jacob's Well and told His disciples of the great harvest of human souls to be gathered, He added: "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal" (John iv. 36). In His great parable of the last judgment, He presents as one of the most blessed experiences of His people the surprises that await them

when they shall find the results and rewards of what would seem to be some of their most trivial acts of kindness—"Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? And when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 37-40). He commended the widow who placed her two mites in the Lord's treasury (Mark xii. 42-44), and the woman who broke the alabaster cruse of ointment as an expression of love to Him (Matt. xxvi. 6-13).

*Reward of Fidelity*

He spoke over and over again also of the rewards or results of fidelity to

Him and in His service. When He tells of the hardships and persecutions many of His people are to bear He pronounces a blessing for every one, and adds, "But he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 4-13).

*Some of the Rewards*

It is inspiring to notice also what are some of the rewards of the Christian as enumerated by Jesus. One of these is life, eternal life. Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John xi. 25, 26). He said to His disciples, "Nevertheless in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke x. 20). He said He should "gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of

heaven" (Mark xiii. 27), and announced eternal life for His people, saying that God had said: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," adding, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. xxii. 32).

### *Heaven Itself*

But He still more definitely speaks of the reward of the Christian life as heaven itself. He tells us plainly that there is such a place, that heaven is not a mere fancy or speculation. He says: "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you" (John xiv. 2). In other words, He tells us that when He came here among men He found them cherishing a hope of a heavenly home, that He Himself knew whether such a home existed or not, also that He was truth and would not deal with men falsely, and adds, "In my Father's house

are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you ” (John xiv. 2). What He really says is that had we been mistaken in regard to our thoughts and hopes of heaven He would have undeceived us when He was here in the world. But our hopes are well founded. “In my Father’s house *are* many mansions.” “If it were *not* so I would have told you.” “I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also ” (vs. 3). He told the dying thief of the reality of the Paradise of the saved, and that he should immediately be in that home in His own presence (Luke xxiii. 43).

### *The Heavenly Home Gathering*

He speaks especially of the heavenly home gathering, when “many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham,

and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. viii. 11). A number of inferences very precious to the heart of the believer may be drawn from these words of Jesus. One is that the kingdom of heaven shall be vastly populated. "Many shall come," and from the four quarters of the earth, to swell the population of heaven. Another suggestion is in regard to the agreeable association the inhabitants shall find in that kingdom. With heavenly familiarity and harmony, because redeemed by the same precious blood, people without distinction of nation or clime or earthly circumstances will "sit down" together in sweet communion there—at the supper table of the Lamb. Let us not fail to notice, too, that this association shall be in the blessedness of mutual recognition. "They shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." These patriarchs will be known. The prophets will be known. The apostles and martyrs will be known. We

shall know each other there. Would it not be a strange thing, indeed, were God to invite to His banqueting table, for the purpose of enjoyment, a company all strangers, not knowing one another and incapable of becoming acquainted? No, the picture Jesus gives us of heaven is one of most blessed and intimate associations between Himself and His redeemed, and mutually between all who enter that home.

### *Heavenly Enjoyment*

A third suggestion from Jesus' words is in regard to the repose and blessed enjoyment all who enter that kingdom shall find. "They shall sit down." This is a peculiar phrase as applied to beatific bliss. It refers to a feast, especially to an Eastern feast, where the guests sat, or rather reclined. The position was always recumbent, one of great restfulness and ease. They shall "sit down" to rest. They shall "sit down" to



converse. It is not alone rest Jesus' words suggest, but rest in the midst of happy associations. This heavenly feast implies the sweetest communion with our heavenly Father, with Christ, our Saviour, with the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide, with the saints and angels, and with our loved ones in glory. They shall "sit down" to listen. How certainly God will reveal Himself and the mysteries of His providential dealings with us—His plans, His wisdom, His great love—speaking to all at His great banqueting table in parental affection and familiarity.

Let us so trust in Christ and live here below that we may have right, by and by, to sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the redeemed at the final home-gathering in the kingdom of God.

## CHAPTER X

### *Summary*

**T**HE study we have made has been definitely of the teachings of Jesus concerning the Christian Life. We believe in the unity of the New Testament. We do not separate between a "theology of Jesus" and a "theology of Paul," or believe that there is any contradiction between the teachings of the Gospels and the teachings of the Epistles. Jesus personally or through the gift of the Holy Spirit was the teacher of all the New Testament writers, and their message is one, though, as naturally would be expected, manifesting a prog-

ress of doctrine as the truths Jesus uttered were apprehended and applied in the newly developing Church. On all the features and characteristics of the Christian life we have considered in the foregoing chapters many additional references to or statements of the same truths could be found in other books of the New Testament. But it certainly is both an interesting and an exceedingly profitable thing for any one to have before him just what Jesus said on the various features of that life.

To sum up in brief our findings as to the teaching of Jesus concerning the Christian life we find, in the first place, that He presented it as the thing to all men of the utmost, the supreme importance. It is the first thing, and it should be placed first in our estimation of values, first in time of attention, and first in our consideration of importance. This importance is attested by the fact that men are lost. It is attested also by the great,

glad fact that salvation is possible. There is no word that tells us of Jesus' coming to the world, of His incarnation, of His life among men, of His solicitude for their welfare, of His sufferings and death on the cross, which does not at the same time tell us of the tremendous importance of the Christian life. Christ put our salvation first when He left His home in heaven "to seek and to save that which was lost." He told us to seek it first through the way He has provided. To fail of doing this is to undervalue His work and show the deepest possible disrespect and disloyalty; while to accept what He has done and try to do what He says is the sure way to both happiness and usefulness here and blessedness hereafter.

Secondly, we find Jesus telling how the Christian life begins. It is through faith in Him and trusting in His atoning death on the cross. Man must "believe" and "come" and "trust," but God

through the Holy Spirit gives eternal life, quickens the dead, is author of the new birth. Jesus says this is mysterious, cannot be explained, but can be illustrated. A stricken Israelite, in obedience to God's command, looked upon a brazen serpent, and lo! the doomed and dying man went free and well. What cured him? Unless we say God, we know not what to say. But how? Ah! there Jesus speaks to our pride and says, "I am talking about things I know, but they belong to the spiritual realm, and you must trust what I say."

Thirdly, we learn that Jesus reveals to us some of the evidences by which we can tell that the new life is begun. Every truly penitent believer is accepted of God, but not every one is conscious of the fact. The believer knows Jesus, trusts Jesus, loves Jesus, loves to think about Him, hear about Him, and tries to please Him. The true Christian has some consciousness of an affectionate

choice of Jesus as his Saviour and Lord, or soon arrives at such a stage.

Fourthly, it must be recognized that the Christian life has conflicts. It was never the plan of Jesus to hide from His followers the temptations and tests and struggles they would surely have to meet. Evil is in the world. Satan is no myth, but an actual and active foe. He is cunning, powerful and treacherous, hating God and hating all the good. Jesus warned against him and his tactics, revealed the conditions of victory, and also told how the struggle well maintained would work out for good to all His followers.

Fifthly, there is the problem of the maintenance of the Christian life. It does not begin full grown, strong and perfect. It must be nourished and strengthened by the use of means. Jesus laid emphasis on the importance of maintaining fellowship with Him and of the faithful use of such means of grace as the

Word, sacraments, and prayer, and of the exercise of good works.

Sixthly, it is made plain by Jesus that He calls His followers not to sadness but to joy ; not from larger things to smaller, not from liberty to bondage, but the opposite. Life, health, peace, joy, the highest blessedness here, as well as hereafter, is the heritage of those who enlist with Him.

Seventhly, it was found that Jesus' call for followers was not an appeal to their natural selfishness. His people are not made exempt from sufferings and trials. Some of them suffer as Christians,—because they are Christians. They suffer from persecution sometimes, from poverty sometimes, from witnessing so much evil in the world, from the loss of kindred and those dear to them. But in the midst of their suffering they have the joy of knowing that God is their heavenly Father, that Christ is their Friend, that the Holy Spirit is their Sanctifier, and

they trust to the infinite love and wisdom and power of the Triune God who controls all things for their good.

Eighthly, it was seen that Christians are called into Jesus' kingdom not only to be saved but to serve. "His servants shall serve Him" not only in heaven; it is their business to serve Him here and now. They are to make His interests their interests, His cause their cause, His kingdom their kingdom, and do all in their power to help forward the day when He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Ninthly, we learned that Jesus makes it plain that the Christian life is a life that is to attain eternal rewards. Over and over again Jesus presented this motive, telling of the rewards of following Him, the rewards of service for Him, the rewards of fidelity to Him, and presented the attractions of the heavenly home.

God has a thousand ways in which to pay a loving heart. Where Jesus is, is



heaven, and the knowledge and love of Jesus will make complete all the rewards of heaven. Saved and cleansed by His blood, may the readers of this book, and the writer of it, too, be among the number of those who shall be so unspeakably happy as to gather around the Throne of Jesus !

“ The light of heaven is the face of Jesus.  
The joy of heaven is the presence of Jesus.  
The melody of heaven is the name of Jesus.  
The harmony of heaven is the praise of Jesus.  
The theme of heaven is the work of Jesus.  
The employment of heaven is the service of Jesus.  
The duration of heaven is the eternity of Jesus.  
The fulness of heaven is Jesus Himself.”



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