

BIBLE STUDIES ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

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Chapter 1

The Power of Sin

All would find the way of salvation easy if they would make the right calculation at the beginning. Jesus says,

"My yoke is easy..." (Matthew 11:30) and it is so. He says, "... my burden is light" (Matthew 11:30); and it is so. But many people who are in the way do not find His yoke easy nor His burden light. And all the difficulty is that they do not make the right calculation as to the contest that is met in the way. Jesus said:

"What king, going to make war against another king, sits not down first, and consults whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends an embassy, and desires conditions of peace." (Luke 14:31-32)

Many start in the way, and this is the right thing to do. But by not properly estimating the force against them nor their power to meet it, they do not prosper in the way as they should, nor as they expected. They do not rightly estimate the power of sin, nor their power to meet it successfully.

In a little while they find themselves failing repeatedly, and then, after many "ups and downs," they begin to think that that is the way, and then begin to excuse sin, and apologize for it, and try to strike

conditions of peace in that sort of experience. But this will never do. Victory can never come that way.

No; sit down first, and "consult" as to what are the forces against you, and whether you are able to meet them, and if not able to meet them, then what to do in order to meet them successfully; for no apology, no compromise, no peace, must ever be sought or allowed with sin.

- "Consult" the chart of the field of battle, the Bible.
- "Consult" the One who knows, as to the power of the enemy.
- "Consult" the Great Commander in the field, as to what equipment and what power are essential to assure victory, not only "at last" but at first.

Time, even much time, spent in this consultation at the beginning, would be always a gain rather than in any sense a loss.

The difficulty does not lie with anyone, in any failure to acknowledge the fact of sin. With everyone the whole difficulty lies in failure to acknowledge the power of sin. Everybody is willing to admit that he has aimed to do right, but has done wrong; and this is only to miss the mark.

Many are willing to be specific, and to say that they have actually sinned, and are altogether sinners, and to confess it to the Lord. It is

well, it is right, to do all this; and yet all this can be done, and, in fact, is done by many, without their acknowledging or confessing the power of sin.

Many do all this, and yet depend upon themselves and what is of themselves, to defeat sin. They insist that they could do better if only they had a better chance; but circumstances are unfavorable--the neighbors are bad; the church-members are not all converted, and therefore matters of church or Sabbath-school work are unpleasant and "trying;" their own family relations are not the best.

All these things and such as these are counted hindrances to progress in the Christian life; and they themselves could do better and be better Christians if circumstances were only as favorable as they should be.

These persons hold that inside they are all right, the good is there; it is outside where the evil lies, and the good that is in them does not have a chance to show itself. If only all the evil influences without, and all opposing circumstances were taken away, then, ah! then, they could easily enough be Christians of just the right kind.

But this is all a deception. It is but an argument presented by the deceitfulness of sin. It is not anything outside of us nor around us, but only what is in us, that can hinder us from being Christians of just the right kind. It is only the power of sin working in us that can ever hinder us in the least from being straightforward Christians.

And until that power is recognized and confessed, we cannot be delivered from it.

But when it is recognized and confessed, we can be delivered from it; and just as constantly and just as thoroughly as it is recognized and confessed, just so constantly and so thoroughly can we be delivered from it. And deliverance from the power of sin is Christianity. The life that is delivered from the power of sin is a Christian life in truth, and it cannot be anything else.

The word of God has made this as plain as anything can be made. The whole thought of Scripture is to show that there is power in sin. The Scripture does not want men to entertain any other view of sin than that there is power in it, and that this power is absolute so far as man himself is concerned. The statements of Scripture, and the very terms in which these statements are framed, show this.

Chapter 2

The Slavery of Sin

"Where sin abounded, sin has reigned." (Romans 5:21) And to reign is:

- to hold and exercise sovereign power;
- to exercise commanding influence;
- to dominate;
- to exercise control over;
- control as by right or superior force;
- to prevail irresistibly; exist widely or to the exclusion of something else.

That is what the word of God says that sin does in men and with men as they are of themselves. And until that fact is recognized, no man can be delivered from the power of sin.

The word used, and translated "reigned," is a word that signifies and relates to governments and the reign of sovereigns. And when the Word of God thus speaks, it wants us to understand that men in sin are under the government and sovereign power of sin, just as men

who are in an earthly kingdom are under the power of that government.

Again: the Scripture describes the condition of the sinner thus:

"I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14)

In these times a man who was sold was a slave, and was in all things absolutely subject to his master. Why, then, is this statement used with reference to men under sin, unless that is the actual condition of men under sin?

Yet more than this: this statement was originally written to the saints who were in Rome. The figure was taken from the Roman system of slavery. And when the brethren in Rome read it, it was the system of Roman slavery that was suggested, and that was intended to be suggested, to their minds as an illustration of the condition of the sinner under the power of sin.

Now the Roman government was a sheer despotism of the worst sort. The relation of the government to the citizen was such that he was but a slave. Who has not read or heard these words?

The Roman Empire filled the world, and when that empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies: to resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. [1]

That was the condition of a citizen under the Roman government; but the figure used in this scripture is not of Roman citizenship but of Roman slavery. And when that was the condition of the Roman citizen, what must have been the condition of the Roman slave?

Roman slavery was a system of bondage imposed upon men by a government that stood toward its own citizens as this quotation describes. The slave was confined in the hands of his owner by such a government as this. The master had absolute power in all things, even to life or death, over the slave. The owner could torture his slave to death or kill him out of hand, and no one could question it; for the government, such a government, confirmed the owner in the absolute possession and control of the one whom he had bought with his money.

And the figure furnished by that system of government and of slavery, is adopted by the Lord in defining the relationship of the sinner to sin, and the condition of the sinner under the power of sin. And the lesson which we are taught in these words of Scripture, and which we are expected to learn from these words, is not simply the fact of sin, but the power of it.

And if people would only see this more and recognize it so, there would be more salvation from sin in the world and among those who profess to be Christian, and there would therefore be much more Christianity in the church.

This same thought is expressed in the same way by Jesus, in the following words:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin." (John 8:34)

This is the way the King James Version reads, and so on the face of the text its force is lost; for when people read it nowadays, they know that the position of a servant is such that he can leave it at any time, and cease to be a servant. Looking at it that way, they decide that they can leave the service of sin at any time, by their own power, and by their own power cease to be servants of sin.

But this is not what Jesus said. What He really said is this:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever commits sin is a slave of sin."

The Greek word is *doulos*, and signifies properly, "a born bondman, or slave." Note, it is not simply one made a slave; but one born a slave. That is what Jesus said; and that is what the Word says yet to every one that is under the power of sin.

Thus in the words of Christ here, as in the other places, it is the power of sin over the sinner, rather than the fact of sin upon him, that is taught, and that He wants men to understand. And He wants

us to understand that this power is properly illustrated only in the system of Roman slavery as it was then in the world.

This power is shown to be such that in its reign, in its mastery over the man who knows only the birth to slavery, the natural birth, it keeps him back from doing the good that he would do, and that he loves, and causes him to do the evil that he would not do, and that he hates. For it is written:

"I am carnal... for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I... The good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. ...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Romans 7:14-15, 19, 18)

But why is this? Why is it that a man does the evil that he hates? Why is it that he does not the good that he would? Why is it that he cannot perform the good that he wills? Oh!

"It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." (Romans 7:17)

I would not do it; but sin that dwells in me causes me to do it. I would do good, but sin that dwells in me holds me back, and will not let me do it.

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my

members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?"
(Romans 7:22-24)

How could the supreme, sovereign, and absolute power of sin be more plainly shown than it is in the scriptures cited in this article? And how could the complete, abject, and helpless slavery of the man who knows the natural birth be more fully depicted than in these same scriptures?

O that men would believe it! O that they would recognize it, and confess it, always! Then they could be delivered. For there is deliverance. There is deliverance as complete as is the captivity. There is freedom as absolute as is the slavery. There is the reign of another power, as certainly supreme and sovereign as was ever the power of sin.

But until we recognize and confess the power of sin as the word of God declares it, we cannot know the power of God as the word of God presents it. Until we acknowledge the complete sovereignty of the power of sin, we cannot acknowledge the complete sovereignty of the power of God.

Note:

1. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter III.

Chapter 3

The Power of Grace

There is power in grace as certainly as there is power in sin. And there is "much more" power in grace than there is in sin. For,

"...where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

We have found that there is power in sin to reign over man, and hold him under its dominion. And just as certainly there is power in grace to reign over sin, and hold man under the dominion of grace against all the power of sin. For,

"...where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That [in order that] as sin has reigned, ...even so might grace reign." (Romans 5:20-21)

The word "reign" here applied to grace, is the same word precisely that is applied to sin. It means as to grace precisely what it means as to sin. The definition of "reign" is just as true when referring to grace as when applied to sin:

"To hold and exercise power; to exercise commanding influence; to dominate; to prevail irresistibly; exist widely, or to the exclusion of something else."

All this is true of grace as certainly as it is true of sin. As certainly as sin holds and exercises sovereign power, and prevails irresistibly to the exclusion of everything else where it reigns, so certainly grace will hold and exercise sovereign power, and will prevail irresistibly to the exclusion of sin, where it is allowed to reign. For...

"...as sin has reigned...even so might grace reign." (Romans 5:21)

"As" and "even so"--think of these expressions. "As" and "even so"--what do these words mean? They have no other meaning than:

"to the same extent or degree; in the same way; like; even as; just as."

Like as sin has reigned,--just as sin has reigned,--to just that same degree it is intended that grace shall reign, and to that degree grace will reign wherever it is allowed to do so.

These expressions emphasize the necessity, before pointed out, that the reign of sin shall be recognized as absolute. The reign of grace must be absolute, or else its purpose will be frustrated. But the reign of sin must be recognized as absolute, or else the reign of grace cannot be so; for just as sin reigned, even so must grace reign.

Therefore it is perfectly plain that not to recognize the power and reign of sin as absolute, is to frustrate the grace of God. This is why it is that the Scriptures insist so strongly upon the fact of the power

and reign of sin over men. This is why the Lord wants that fact recognized and ever held in mind.

The Lord wants men to be absolutely free from sin, and to be the servants of righteousness. But this cannot be, so long as men fail fully to recognize the power and reign of sin. Therefore He tells men over and over and always insists that of themselves they have no power at all against sin; that they are slaves to a power which keeps them from doing the good that they would, and compels them to do the evil which they hate.

This the Lord tells to men because it is all true; and He wants men to believe what He tells them as to the power and reign of sin, so that they may know the power and reign of grace. For grace is to reign as fully as ever sin did. The power of sin is to be so broken that the slave is free, and no more serves sin.

"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."
(Romans 6:6)

Men have served sin; they do serve sin. But God has provided that henceforth they shall not serve sin; that they shall be free from sin, and the servants of righteousness only, as formerly they were free from righteousness and the servants of sin only.

"For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14)

"...where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:20-21)

It is therefore perfectly plain that to obtain the reign of grace in our behalf, it is essential that we confess the reign of sin. To know the power of grace, it is essential to confess the power of sin. And to insure the continued power and reign of grace, it is essential that there be a continued confession of the power of sin.

To insure the absolute reign of grace, it is essential that we continually confess our absolute weakness and helplessness in the presence of the power of sin: to confess...

"...that in us dwells no good thing;" (Romans 7:21)

and that

"...[we] have no confidence in the flesh." (Philippians 3:3)

Then the way is clear for grace to manifest itself. And there being nothing to hinder the power of grace, its reign will be complete.

We are constantly to confess our weakness, our absolute helplessness; but we are not to deplore it. Just here is where many miss the right way. They do feel their weakness, they confess that

they do; but they do this only to deplore it and fairly to work themselves into discouragement and even despair over it. This is all wrong; this is to take the wrong road entirely.

It is right, yes, it is essential, that we confess always our weakness, our absolute helplessness. This is the key of the whole situation. But instead of deploring it, thank God for it; for Christ says:

"My grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Instead of being discouraged by your weakness, glory in it; for it is written:

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

So long as we feel that we have any strength to cope with sin, we depend upon this instead of upon grace, and so we are defeated; we depend upon ourselves instead of upon the Lord, and so we fail.

But when we constantly confess our absolute weakness, and recognize the fixed fact that there is no power, no help, no good thing, in us against the power of sin, then we shall depend wholly upon the Lord: all our hope will be in grace.

And the way being thus fully opened and held unhindered to the

work of grace, grace will fully occupy the place, and will reign against all the power of sin. And then:

"Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14)

Thus it is that:

"When I am weak, then am I strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10)

It is only when we are weak, that we can possibly be strong. No Christian wants to feel any other way than weak, because then he knows that the way is open for grace to reign; and thus when he is weak, then he is strong:

"Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." (Ephesians 6:10)

When you feel strong, you are certainly weak; for strength is not of yourself that you can feel it, but of the Lord, that you may believe it. When you feel strong, you think you can stand; but:

"Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)

But when you feel weak and know that you cannot stand, then:

"...he shall be held up: for God is able to make him stand." (Romans

14:4)

Thank the Lord that you do feel your weakness, and even then believe that your weakness is greater than you feel. And then believe in the Lord's strength for you, and in His abiding grace to impart this strength to your life, and reign there over all the power of sin--reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then as it is the truth of God that:

"As sin has reigned,.. even so might grace reign," (Romans 5:21)

and

"Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are...under grace."
(Romans 6:14)

Then, under the reign of grace, it will be found just as easy to do right, as under the reign of sin it was easy to do wrong. Then it will be found, indeed, that His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

Chapter 4

Shall it be Grace or Sin?

It can never be repeated too often, that under the reign of grace it is just as easy to do right, as under the reign of sin it is easy to do wrong. This must be so; for if there is not more power in grace than there is in sin, then there can be no salvation from sin.

But there is salvation from sin; this no one who believes in Christianity can deny. Yet salvation from sin certainly depends upon there being more power in grace than there is in sin.

Then, there being more power in grace than there is in sin, it cannot possibly be otherwise than that wherever the power of grace can have control, it will be just as easy to do right as without this it is easy to do wrong.

No man ever yet naturally found it difficult to do wrong. His great difficulty has always been to do right. But this is because man naturally is enslaved to a power--the power of sin--that is absolute in its reign. And so long as that power has sway, it is not only difficult but impossible to do the good that he knows and that he would.

But let a mightier power than that have sway, then is it not plain enough that it will be just as easy to serve the will of the mightier power, when it reigns, as it was to serve the will of the other power when it reigned?

But grace is not simply more powerful than is sin. If this were indeed all, even then there would be fullness of hope and good cheer to every sinner in the world.

But this, good as it would be, is not all; it is not nearly all. There is much more power in grace than there is in sin. For,

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

And just as there is much more power in grace than there is in sin, just so much more hope and good cheer there are for every sinner in the world.

How much more power, then, is there in grace than there is in sin? Let me think a moment. Let me ask myself a question or two.

"Whence comes grace?"

From God, to be sure.

"Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:3)

"Whence comes sin?"

From the devil, of course.

"Sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning." (1 John 3:8)

Well, then, how much more power is there in grace than there is in sin? It is as plain as A B C that there is just as much more power in grace than there is in sin, as there is more power in God than there is in the devil.

It is therefore also perfectly plain that the reign of grace is the reign of God; and that the reign of sin is the reign of Satan. And is it not therefore perfectly plain also, that it is just as easy to serve God by the power of God as it is to serve Satan with the power of Satan?

Where the difficulty comes in, in all this, is that so many people try to serve God with the power of Satan. But that can never be done.

"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." (Matthew 12:33)

"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matthew 7:16)

The tree must be made good: root and branch. It must be made new.

"You must be born again." (John 3:7)

"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." (Galatians 6:15)

Let no one ever attempt to serve God with anything but the present, living power of God, that makes him a new creature; with nothing but the much more abundant grace that condemns sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3), and...

"...reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:21)

Then the service of God will indeed be...

"...in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

Then it will be found that His yoke is indeed "easy" and His burden "light." (Matthew 11:30) Then His service will be found indeed to be...

"...with joy unspeakable and full of glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

Did Jesus ever find it difficult to do right? Everyone will instantly say, "No!" But why? He was just as human as we are. He took flesh and blood the same as ours.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." (John 1:14)

And the kind of flesh that He was made in this world, was precisely such as was in this world.

"In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren."
(Hebrews 2:17)

"In all things"! It does not say, "In all things but one." There is no exception. He was made in all things like as we are. He was of Himself as weak as we are; for He said,

"I can of my own self do nothing." (John 5:30)

Why, then, being in all things like as we are, did He find it always easy to do right? Because He never trusted to Himself, but His trust was always in God alone. All His dependence was upon the grace of God. He always sought to serve God, only with the power of God. And therefore the Father dwelt in Him, and did the works of righteousness. Therefore it was always easy for Him to do right.

But as He is, so are we in this world. He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps.

"It is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

This is true in us as well as in Him. All power in heaven and in earth is given unto Him (Matthew 28:18); and He desires that you may

be...

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power."
(Colossians 1:11)

"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;" (Colossians 2:9)

--and He strengthens you...

"...with might by His Spirit in the inner man, That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith, ... that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:16-17, 19)

True, Christ partook of the Divine nature, and so do you if you are a child of promise, and not of the flesh; for by the promises you are partakers of the Divine nature:

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (2 Peter 1:4)

There was nothing given to Him in this world, and He had nothing in this world, that is not freely given to you, or that you may not have.

All this is in order that you may walk in newness of life; that

henceforth you may not serve sin; that you may be the servant of righteousness only; that you may be freed from sin; that sin may not have dominion over you; that you may glorify God on the earth; and that you may be like Jesus.

And therefore:

"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7, 13)

And,

"[I] beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain."
(2 Corinthians 6:1)

Chapter 5

Who Shall Reign?

"The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

To see that this is a universal truth it is necessary only to read the connection, and know to whom these words were originally spoken. Here is the passage:

And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God comes not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21)

Those Pharisees were not believers in Christ. On the contrary, they were constantly spying upon Him, laying traps for Him, persecuting Him, and laying plans to kill Him. And yet to these and such as these the Lord says,

"...the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

And when this is true of such as those, it is evident that it is true of everybody in the world; and that it is a universal truth that the kingdom of God is in man. And if God is not recognized and allowed to reign in His kingdom that is within, it matters not to such persons when the outward kingdom and reign may come; they can

have no part in it anyhow; it would mean only destruction and perdition to them.

Man was made to glorify God.

"I have created him for my glory." (Isaiah 43:7)

Christ came into the world to make manifest the purpose of God in the creation and existence of man; and when He had finished His course upon the earth, He said to the Father:

"I have glorified You on the earth." (John 17:4)

In order to glorify God on the earth,

"He emptied Himself." (Philippians 2:7)

And when He emptied Himself, and took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, God dwelt in Him, and worked in Him, and was manifest in Him so entirely that none but God was seen in all His life. And thus He glorified, He made manifest, God on the earth.

This is God's purpose in the creation and existence of man; and this is that which will be manifest in all intelligences in the universe when the grand work of redemption shall have been completed. For when the end comes; when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when God shall have put all

things under Christ's feet, and so shall have subdued all things unto the Son,

"...then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:28)

Then all that will be in anyone, or that will be manifest in anyone, will be God. And thus God being all in each one, He will be all in all of them.

This was God's purpose concerning man when He created him. The purpose was that God, and God alone, should be manifest in the man. The purpose was that God should dwell in him and walk in him, that God alone should reign in him and rule over him. This was the condition of the man when God put him upon the earth and in the garden.

Thus God established His temple, His throne, and His kingdom, in man. And thus it is that to all mankind it is true that:

"...the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

Yet the Lord made man free. God cannot have any compulsory or necessitous service. And to be happy, even with God, man must be free. His service, even to God, in order to be happy service, must be from choice, willingly and freely made.

"If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land."
(Isaiah 1:19)

"Whosoever will, let him come." (Revelation 22:17)

And in the nature of things, freedom of choice to serve the Lord, carries with it freedom of choice not to do so.

When God established His kingdom in man to reign there, He would reign there, He could reign there, only upon the man's choice. And the Lord put the man in the garden, and arranged everything there for the exercise of his freedom of choice.

He put the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, and with no boundary about it. Access to this tree was left as open as to any others, except in the word of the Lord,

"You shall not eat of it." (Genesis 2:17)

And whether he would eat of it or not was for the man to choose. And the man did choose the wrong way. And he did this by choosing to follow the will and the way of another than God. And in so choosing, he did choose that another than God should have a place in him. And thus he allowed a usurper to enter this kingdom of God, and occupy the throne there, and demand worship in this temple that was in him.

Yet the kingdom is of right the Lord's, even though the usurper has occupied it. The throne is the Lord's, even though the usurper sits upon it. Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord; and it was still the throne of the Lord, though Solomon afterward sat upon it in iniquity.

The temple is of right the Lord's, even though a false god is there, and a false worship be conducted there. It is "in the temple of God" that the great usurper sits,

"...as God, ... showing himself that he is God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

Thus it is that the kingdom is God's, even though the usurper be ruling in it; and the throne is the Lord's, even though the usurper be occupying it. And thus it is true that to every man that comes into the world the word is spoken,

"The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

Then the further question comes to every man that comes into the world, who shall reign in this kingdom?

- Will you have the usurper to reign there? or will you allow the rightful King to reign there?
- Will you have the usurper to reign there only to your ruin? or will you have the rightful King reign there only to salvation?

- Shall the usurper occupy the throne only in iniquity? or shall the rightful Lord occupy it only in righteousness?
- Shall the usurper rule only to shame? or will you have the One "whose right it is" to rule there only to glory, both present and eternal?

This is the consideration that presents itself to the constant thought and the ever present choice of all mankind. And therefore the living and ever-present word is:

"Choose you this day whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15)

"Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 4:7)

"[Today,] while it is called today, ... If you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." (Hebrews 3:13, 15)

"Now is the accepted time; ... now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2)

"The kingdom of God is within you." Who shall reign in this kingdom in you? Who shall reign there "now," "today," "while it is called today"? Choose you, choose you, "choose you this day" who.

All that the rightful King asks of you, that He may take His own

place in His own kingdom, and reign there, is that by an active, intelligent choice, you shall now choose Him to reign. For,

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him." (Revelation 3:20)

"My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23)

"I will dwell in them and walk in them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (2 Corinthians 6:16)

"I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." (Hebrews 8:10)

"I will be your King." (Hosea 13:10)

Then in its full, true, and rightful sense, will the kingdom of God be in you; for there is the kingdom, and there will then be the King, the throne, and the laws of the kingdom.

"The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:21)

Choose you this day who shall sit and rule in that kingdom. Choose that the rightful King shall have His own place in His own kingdom. He cannot reign there without your choice. Upon your choice He will reign; He will reign the King that He is, with the power that is His--with power...

"...by His Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; ...that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians 3:16-17, 19)

Then God will be manifest in you, and you will glorify God on the earth. This was the purpose of God when He created man at the first; and this is His purpose in creating him again in Christ Jesus. Choose you this day that this purpose shall be met in you.

And not to choose is to choose. Not to choose that God shall reign, is to choose that He shall not reign. And to choose that God shall not reign, is to choose that Satan--the usurper--shall reign.

Not to choose that God shall be glorified in you, is to choose that He shall not be glorified in you. And to choose that God shall not be glorified in you, is to choose that Satan shall be glorified in you.

And for God to be glorified in you, self must be emptied, that God may be all. Self must be emptied in all, that God may be all in all.

Chapter 6

Who Shall Be Glorified?

Man was not made to glorify himself, but to glorify the Lord only. He was not made to make known himself, but to make known only the Lord.

"I have created him for my glory." (Isaiah 43:7)

When the man was made and put in the garden, God dwelt in him and walked in him; he was crowned with glory and honor from God, and God was glorified in him. God was manifest in him; in him the image of God was seen. He was made thus ever to reflect, to make known, the image and glory of God.

The word of God was to be his life and his guide. By having the word of God to live in him, he was to continue to glorify God. God told him the way that he should walk and live, and also the way he should not take and die.

So long as the man believed this word, so long as he walked in this way, he would glorify God, God would be made known through him, the image of God would be seen reflected in him.

But if the man should not believe this word, and should take the other way, just then he would separate from God, and God could not

be made known through him, the image of God could not then be reflected in him.

And as certainly as the man should separate himself from God, though the Lord could not then be glorified, made manifest, reflected, in him, yet so certainly somebody would be manifested in him, somebody would be glorified there. Who would this "somebody" be? That would depend upon who was chiefly concerned in his separating from God.

If the man himself, altogether of himself and in the invention of his own heart, should turn from the word of God and take the other way, then it would be only himself that would be exalted, only himself that would be manifested.

But if some other one should show the way and give the word that would separate from God, and if the man were to accept this word and take this way, then it is perfectly plain that not the man himself but the one whose suggestion he accepted, whose word he believed; and whose way he followed, this is the one who would be exalted, this the one who would be manifested and reflected in the man.

Now mankind is separated from God. That is a fact. But how was this separation accomplished? Was it altogether from man himself? Did he originate it? No; everybody knows that this is not the way in which it was brought about. But Satan,

"...the serpent, said...You shall not surely die: For God does know

that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5)

And this word was believed, this word was accepted, instead of the word of God; and this way was taken instead of the way of the Lord. Then as certainly as it was the word and the way of Satan that was accepted by man instead of the word and way of God, so certainly was Satan accepted and followed instead of God.

Therefore it was not God that was manifested in man when he sinned, it was not man himself; but it was Satan instead of God and instead of man himself.

Again: the man was to receive all his information from God. He was to believe the word of God and be guided by that, this way his mind would be formed from God, his thought would be the thought of God--in short, he would have the mind of God.

But when he received and believed the word of Satan, his thought became the thought of Satan--in short, his mind became the mind of Satan. This is why it is that the carnal mind, the natural mind,

"...is enmity against God, [and] is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7)

Notice, this mind is not said to be at enmity with God; but it is enmity against God. If it were at enmity with God, it might be reconciled to God by the taking away of that which put it at enmity.

Man is at enmity with God, and is reconciled to God by the taking away of that which has set him at enmity, and this is "the enmity." Christ "abolished the enmity" that He might reconcile men unto God.

But this is not so with the carnal mind, the natural mind, the minding of the flesh. It is enmity itself. It never can be reconciled to God;

"...for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."
(Romans 8:7)

And the reason that it is enmity and cannot be subject to God, is precisely because it is the mind of Satan. These considerations show conclusively that the "somebody" who is exalted, manifested, reflected, in man separate from God, is none other than Satan.

So then when man was created, not to glorify himself but to glorify God, and then chose another way, still he does not glorify himself but glorifies Satan. So that in having his own way separate from God, no man from Adam until now has ever really had his own way; he has had Satan's way, in fact; and, separate from God, it never can be otherwise.

The only possible way in which any man can ever reach the point where he really can have his own way, is everlastingly to choose God's way. Man was not created to have his own way separate from

God. He was created to have his own way, with God. For man was created not only to glorify God, but also that he himself should be glorified. Man was created not only that God should be glorified in him, but also that he should be glorified in God. Not only is God to be made known in man, but man himself is to be made known in God.

"Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. And if God be glorified in Him [in the Son], God shall also glorify Him [the Son] in Himself [in God]." (John 13:31)

And this is why it is that though now we are the sons of God,

"...it does not yet appear what we shall be." (1 John 3:2)

And in this world it never will "appear what we shall be." We are the sons of God; and in this it is with us as with the original sons of God. While we are in this world, we are to let it appear in us what God is. Then when this is finished, God, in the world to come and in eternity, will make it appear what we shall be.

In this world we are to glorify God. In the world to come and through eternity God will glorify us. He asks us to make Him manifest in this world where He is not known, and when that is past, He will make us manifest in all worlds where we are not known.

"Then that honor me I will honor." (1 Samuel 2:30)

Who, then, will not choose the Lord's way?

* Who will choose his own way apart from God, the way in which he cannot have his own way even when he chooses it?

* Who will not choose the Lord's way, the only way in which he can possibly have his own way?

* Who will try to be "himself" in the way in which he cannot possibly be himself?

* Who will not seek with all the heart to be himself in the only way in which it is possible to be himself that is, in God?

* Who will seek to exalt himself instead of God, when all that he can do by it is to exalt Satan instead of both himself and God?

To all men let the question be asked for ever, Whom will you glorify? God or Satan?

"Choose you this day, ..." (Joshua 24:15)

"...today, while it is called today." (Hebrews 3:13)

Chapter 7

Receive Not the Grace of God in Vain

Can every believer have grace enough to keep him free from sinning? Yes. Indeed, everybody in the world can have enough to keep him from sinning. If any one does not have it, it is not because enough has not been given; but because he does not take that which has been given. For,

"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7)

The measure of the gift of Christ is Himself wholly, and that is the measure of:

"...all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9)

To the fullness of the Godhead there is, indeed, no measure; it is boundless, it is simply the infinity of God. Yet that is the only measure of the grace that is given to every one of us. The boundless measure of the fullness of the Godhead is the only thing that can express the proportion of grace that is given to everyone who is in this world. For,

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Romans 5:20)

This grace is given in order that:

"As sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:21)

It is given in order that:

"Sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are...under grace." (Romans 6:14)

It is given also...

"For the perfecting of the saints." (Ephesians 4:12)

The object of it is to bring each one to perfection in Christ Jesus--to the perfection too, that is fully up to God's standard; for it is given for the building up of the body of Christ,

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:13)

It is given to "every one of us":

"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ," (Ephesians 4:7)

--"till we all come" to perfection, even by "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

Again, this grace is given to every one where sin abounds; and it brings salvation to everyone to whom it is given. Bringing salvation in itself, the measure of the salvation which it brings to everyone is only the measure of its own fullness, which is nothing less than the measure of the fullness of the Godhead.

As the boundless grace is given to every one bringing salvation to the extent of its own full measure, then if any one does not have boundless salvation, why is it? Plainly it can be only because he will not take that which is given.

As boundless grace is given to everyone, in order that it shall reign in him against all the power of sin, as certainly as ever sin reigned; and in order that sin shall not have dominion, then if sin still reigns in any one, if sin yet has dominion over any one, where lies the fault? Clearly it lies only in this, that he will not allow the grace to do for him and in him that which it is given to do. By unbelief he frustrates the grace of God. So far as he is concerned, the grace has been given in vain.

But every believer, by his very profession, says that he has received the grace of God. Then if in the believer grace does not reign instead of sin, it is plain enough that he is receiving the grace of God in vain. If grace is not bringing the believer onward toward a perfect

man in the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, then he is receiving the grace of God in vain. Therefore the exhortation of the Scripture is,

"We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

The grace of God is fully able to accomplish that for which it is given, if only it is allowed to work. We have seen that grace being altogether from God, the power of grace is nothing but the power of God. It is plain enough therefore that the power of God is abundantly able to accomplish all for which it is given:

- the salvation of the soul,
- deliverance from sin and from the power of it,
- the reign of righteousness in the life, and
- the perfecting of the believer unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

--if only it can have place in the heart and in the life to work according to the will of God. But the power of God is...

"...unto salvation to everyone that believes." (Romans 1:16)

Unbelief frustrates the grace of God. Many believe and receive the grace of God for the salvation from sins that are past, but are content with that, and do not give it the same place in the soul, to reign against the power of sin, that they did to save from sins of the past. This, too, is but another phase of unbelief.

So as to the one great final object of grace--the perfection of the life in the likeness of Christ--they do practically receive the grace of God in vain.

"We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain. (For He said, I have heard you in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored you: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.) Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." (2 Corinthians 6:1-3)

Nor does this word "ministry" refer simply to the ordained ministry of the pulpit; it includes everyone who receives the grace of God, or that has named the name of Christ. For,

"As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)

Therefore He does not want anyone to receive the grace of God in vain, lest that grace and its blessed working be misrepresented to the world, and so men be further hindered from yielding to it. He does

not want His grace to be received in vain, because when it is, offense is given in many things, and the ministry of grace itself is blamed.

Yet when the grace of God is not received in vain, but is given the place that belongs to it, "no offense" will be given "in anything," and the ministry will not only be not blamed but will be blest.

And now to show how complete and all-pervading the reign of grace will be in the life where it is not received in vain, the Lord has set down the following list, embracing "all things," and in which we shall approve ourselves unto God. Read it carefully:

"In all things approving ourselves [unto God]...

In much patience,

In afflictions,

In necessities,

In distresses,

In stripes,

In imprisonment,

In tumults,

In labors,

In watchings,

In fastings;

By pureness,

By knowledge,

By longsuffering,

By kindness,

By the Holy Ghost,

By love unfeigned,

By the word of truth,

By the power of God,

By the armor of righteousness

on the right hand and on the left,

By honor and dishonor,

By evil report and good report:

As deceivers, and yet true;

As unknown, and yet well known;

As dying, and, behold, we live;

As chastened, and not killed;

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;

As poor, yet making many rich;

As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2 Corinthians 6:4-10)

This list covers all the experiences that can ever enter into the life of any believer in this world. It shows that where the grace of God is not received in vain, that grace will so take possession and control of the life, that every experience that enters into the life will be taken by grace, and turned to making us approved unto God, and building us up in perfection unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

"We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

Chapter 8

Ministers of God

From the list that the Lord has drawn, in 2 Corinthians 6:1-10, it is plain that there is nothing that can ever come into the life of the believer in Christ, but that the grace of God will take it and turn it to the good of the believer, and make it serve only to his advancement toward perfection in Christ Jesus.

This the grace of God will do always, and nothing but this, if only the believer will allow the Lord to have His own way in his life; if only he will allow grace to reign. Thus it is that:

"All things are for your sakes." (2 Corinthians 4:15)

And this is how "all things are for your sakes;" and this is how...

"All things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

This is grand. It is indeed glorious. It is salvation itself. This is how the believer is enabled...

"... always... to triumph in Christ." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

This, however, is but half the story. The Lord proposes not only to

save him who now believes, but He will use him in ministering to all others the knowledge of God, that they also may believe.

We are not to think that the Lord's grace and gifts to us are only for us. They are for us first, in order that not only we ourselves shall be saved, but that we may be enabled to benefit all others in communicating to them the knowledge of God. We ourselves must be partakers of salvation before we can lead others to it. Therefore it is written:

"As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." (1 Peter 4:10)

And,

"All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Thus every man who receives the grace of God, at the same time receives with it the ministry of that grace to all others. Every one who finds himself reconciled to God, receives with that reconciliation the ministry of reconciliation to all others. Here also the exhortation applies:

"We...beseech you also that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

Are you a partaker of grace? Then "minister the same" to others; do not receive it in vain. Are you reconciled to God? Then know that he has given to you also the ministry of reconciliation. Have you received this ministry in vain?

If we do not receive the grace of God in vain, if only we will allow grace to reign, the Lord will cause it to be that "in all things" we shall approve "ourselves as the ministers of God." This is the truth. The Lord says it, and it is so.

"In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God." (2 Corinthians 6:4)

That is, in all things we shall be conveying to others the knowledge of God. And thus the Lord proposes not only to cause us always "to triumph in Christ," on our own part, but also to make...

"...manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

That is, He proposes to make known to others by us, and in every place, the knowledge of Himself. We cannot do this of ourselves. He is to do it by us. We are to cooperate with Him. We are to be workers together with Him. And when we do thus cooperate with Him, then as certainly as we do so, so certainly will He cause us always to triumph in Christ, and will also make manifest the knowledge of Himself by us in every place.

He can do it, thank the Lord. Do not say, do not even think, that He cannot do this by you. He can do it by you. He will, too, if only you will not receive His grace in vain; if you will only let grace reign; if you will be a worker together with Him.

It is true that there is a mystery about how this can be. It is a mystery how God can make manifest the knowledge of Himself by such persons as you and I are, in any place, much less in every place. Yet mystery though it be, it is the very truth.

But do we not believe the mystery of God? Assuredly we do believe it. Then never forget that the mystery of God is God manifest in the flesh. And you and I are flesh. Then the mystery of God is God manifest in you and me, who believe. Believe it.

Do not forget, either, that the mystery of God is not God manifest in sinless flesh, but God manifest in sinful flesh. There could never be any mystery about God's manifesting Himself in sinless flesh--in one who had no connection whatever with sin. That would be plain enough.

But that He can manifest Himself in flesh laden with sin and with all the tendencies of sin, such as ours is--that is a mystery. Yea, it is the mystery of God. And it is a glorious fact, thank the Lord! Believe it.

And before all the world, and for the joy of every person in the

world, in Jesus Christ He has demonstrated that this great mystery is indeed a fact in human experience. For,

"As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same. In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren." (Hebrews 2:14, 17)

And therefore God...

"...made Him to be sin for us." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

"He has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

Thus, in our flesh, having our nature, laden with iniquity, and Himself made to be sin, Christ Jesus lived in this world, tempted in all points like as we are; and yet God always caused Him to triumph in Him, and made manifest the savor of His knowledge by Him in every place.

Thus God was manifest in the flesh,--in our flesh, in human flesh laden with sin,--and made to be sin in itself, weak and tempted as ours is. And thus the mystery of God was made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. Oh, believe it!

And this is the mystery of God today and forever--God manifest in the flesh, in human flesh, in flesh, laden with sin, tempted and tried. In this flesh, God will make manifest the knowledge of Himself in

every place where the believer is found. Believe it, and praise His holy name!

This is the mystery which today, in the third angel's message, is again to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. This is the mystery of God, which in this time is to be "finished" (Revelation 10:7),--not only finished in the sense of being ended to the world, but finished in the sense of being brought to completion in its grand work in the believer.

This is the time when the mystery of God is to be finished in the sense that God is to be manifest in every true believer, in every place where that believer shall be found. This is, in deed and in truth, the keeping of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (Revelation 14:12)

"Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

"I have revealed God in the flesh." Our faith is the victory that has overcome the world. Therefore, and now,

"Thanks be unto God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Chapter 9

Kept by the Word

In the Christian life everything depends upon the Word of God. It is true that God is able, and desires, to keep us from sinning; but this must be done through His Word. So it is written,

"By the word of your lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer." (Psalm 17:4)

"Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You." (Psalm 119:11)

This is the way that God has appointed, and there is no other way to have this thing accomplished. Nor is this way appointed merely because He arbitrarily chose that this should be the way, and then laid it upon men that this must be the way that they should go.

His Word is the way of salvation and the way of sanctification (Christian living), because this is the way that the Lord does things; because this is the way that He manifests Himself.

It was by His word that He created all things in the beginning; it is by His Word that he creates men anew; and it will be by His word that He will recreate this world and all things pertaining to it.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of

them by the breath of His mouth. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast." (Psalm 33:6, 9)

"Being born again, ...by the word of God." (1 Peter 1:23)

"And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, It is done." (Revelation 21:5-6)

It is not only that the worlds were created by the word of God; but they are also sustained by the same word.

"By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby [by the word of God] the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store." (2 Peter 3:5-7)

So also it is not only that the Christian is created by the word of God, but by that same word he is sustained, nourished, and caused to grow. God holds up "all things" by His powerful word. And the Christian is among this "all things" no less than any or all the worlds.

There can be no question whatever that all the worlds are held up, and held in their places, by the Lord. But it is not only all the worlds, it is "all things" that are held up and held in place by the Lord.

"...upholding all things by the word of His power," (Hebrews 1:3)

And it is as true of the Christian as it is of any star in the firmament or any world on high. Nor can there be any question that the stars and the world are held up and held in their courses by the word of the Lord. And no less than this can there be any question that the Christian is held up and held in his right course by the word of the Lord.

This is to be believed and depended upon by every one who professes the name of Christ. You and I can no more hold ourselves up and in the right way than can the sun or the earth. And as certainly as the worlds are dependent upon His word, so certainly is the Christian to depend upon His word.

And when this is so, the Christian is kept in the way of the Lord as certainly and as easily as is any planet in the universe. It is written:

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling." (Jude 1:24)

And He says,

"I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10)

"Yea, he shall be held up; for God is able to make him stand."
(Romans 14:4)

O struggling, failing Christian, is not that word which holds up great worlds able also to hold up you? Trust that word. Depend implicitly upon it. Rest wholly upon it: and then you will find rest in it.

Trust the Lord to hold you up, just as you trust him to hold up the sun. His word holds up the sun, and His word is over and over to you,

"Fear not; for I am with you...I will uphold you." (Isaiah 41:10)

"I...will keep you." (Isaiah 42:6)

"...you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1)

"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

I will never leave you till I have done that thing which I have spoken to you of.

"The word of God is quick ["living," RV] and powerful." (Hebrews 4:12)

"Powerful" means "full of power." The word of God is living and full of power, to do for you, with you, and in you, all that that word says. Believe that word, trust it: for it is the word of the living God. It is the word of the pitying Saviour.

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (James 1:21)

"I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up." (Acts 20:32)

"[You] are kept by the power of God through faith." (1 Peter 1:5)

The power of God is manifested through His word, and therefore it is His powerful word. Faith comes by hearing the word of God; therefore it is the faithful word, the word full of faith.

Therefore when He says, you "are kept by the power of God through faith," it is only saying in another way, you are kept by the word of God,

"...unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

Believe that word, trust it, and find its keeping power.

Chapter 10

The Power of the Word

"As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

The earth can bring forth vegetation only because of the moisture that comes upon it by the rain or the snow from heaven. Without this, everything would fade and perish. So also is it with the life of man and the word of God. Without the word of God the life of man is as barren of power and of good as is the earth without rain.

But only let the word of God fall upon the heart as the showers upon the earth; then the life will be fresh and beautiful in the joy and peace of the Lord, and fruitful with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.

Notice, too, it is not you who are to do that which He pleases; but,

"It shall accomplish that which I please."

You are not to read or hear the word of God, and say, I must do that, I will do that. You are to open the heart to that word, that it may

accomplish the will of God in you. It is not you who are to do it, but it. "It," the word of God itself, is to do it, and you are to let it.

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you." (Colossians 3:16)

That is stated in another place thus:

"When you receive the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Thus it is the word of God that must work in you. You are not to work to do the word of God: the word of God is to work in you to cause you to do.

"Whereunto I also labor, striving according to His working, which works in me mightily." (Colossians 1:29)

The word of God being living and full of power, when it is allowed to work in the life, there will be powerful work wrought in that individual. As this word is the word of God, the power, of which it is full, is only the power of God; and when that word is allowed to work in the life, there will be the work of God manifested in the life- it is His power working mightily. And thus:

"It is God that works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure." (Philippians 2:13)

"...it shall accomplish that which I please." (Isaiah 55:11)

Let it.

From these scriptures it is plain that we are expected to look upon the word of God only as self-fulfilling. The word of God is self-fulfilling. This is the great truth presented everywhere in the Bible. This is the difference between the word of God and the word of men. And this is just the difference emphasized in the passage that says,

"...when you received the word of God...you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

There is no power in the word of a man to do what it says. Whatever may be the man's ability to accomplish what he says, there is no power in the man's word itself to accomplish what he says. A man's word may express the easiest possible thing for him to accomplish, and you may thoroughly believe it, yet it is altogether dependent upon the man himself to accomplish it apart from his word. It is not his word that does it. It is he himself that must do it; and this just as really as though he had spoken no word at all. Such is the word of men.

It is not so with the word of God. When the word is spoken by the Lord, there is at that moment in that word the living power to

accomplish what the word expresses. It is not needed that the Lord employ any shadow of any other means than that word itself to accomplish what the word says.

The Bible is full of illustrations of this, and they are written to teach us this very thing,--that we shall look upon the word as the word of God, and not as the word of men; and that we may receive it thus as it is in truth, the word of God, that it may work effectually in us the will and good pleasure of God.

"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. For He spoke, and it was." (Psalm 33:6, 9)

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Hebrews 11:3)

At first there were no worlds at all. More than this, there was none of the materials of which the worlds are made. There was nothing. Then God spoke, and all the worlds were in their places. From whence came the worlds, then? Before He spoke, there were none; after He spoke, there they were. Whence, then, did they come? What produced them? What produced the material of which they are composed? What caused them to exist?

It was the word which was spoken that did it all. And this word did it all, because it was the word of God. There was in that word the

divinity of life and spirit, the creative power, to do all that the word expressed. Such is the word of God.

"And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." (1 Peter 1:25)

The word of God in the Bible is the same, the same in life, in spirit, in creative power, precisely the same as that word that made the heavens and all the host of them. It was Jesus Christ who spoke the word at creation; it is He who speaks the word in the Bible.

At creation the word which He spoke made the worlds; in the Bible the word which He speaks saves and sanctifies the soul. In the beginning the word which He spoke created the heavens and the earth; in the Bible the word which He speaks creates in Christ Jesus the man who receives the word. In both places, and everywhere in the work of God, it is the word that does it.

"Let the word of God dwell in you richly." (Colossians 3:16)

Receive it,

"...not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Then,

"As the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto it sent it." (Isaiah 55:10-11)

"...to you is the word of this salvation sent." (Acts 13:26)

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able [literally, "full of power"] to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."
(Acts 20:32)

Chapter 11

The Word that Works

In the 8th chapter of Matthew it is related that a centurion came to Jesus,

"...beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus said unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. And Jesus said unto the centurion, go your way: and as you have believed, so be it done unto you. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." (Matthew 8:5-8, 13)

Now what was it that the centurion expected would heal his servant? It was "the word only," which Jesus would speak. And after the word was spoken, what did the centurion depend upon, to what did he look, for the healing power? It was "the word only."

He did not look for the Lord to do it in some ways apart from the word. No. He heard the word,

"...so be it done unto you." (Matthew 8:13)

He accepted that word as it is in truth the word of God, and expected it, depended upon it, to accomplish that which it said. And it was so.

And that word is the word of God today as certainly as in the day that it was originally spoken. It has lost none of its power, for that word...

"...lives and abides forever." (1 Peter 1:23)

Again, in John 4:46-52 it is related how a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum, came to Jesus at Cana of Galilee, and...

"...besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus unto him, except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe. The nobleman said unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus said unto him, Go your way; your son lives. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, your son lives. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Your son lives." (John 4:47-53)

This is the power of the word of God to the man who receives it as it is in truth the word of God. This is the power that:

"...effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

This is the way that the word of God accomplishes that which He pleases, in those who will receive it, and let it dwell in them.

Notice that in both instances the thing was accomplished at the very time when the word was spoken. Notice also that the sick ones were not in the immediate presence of Jesus, but some distance away--the latter was at least a day's journey away from where Jesus was spoken to by the nobleman. Yet he was healed at once, when the word was spoken.

And that word is living and full of power today, as certainly as it was that day, to everyone who receives it as was done that day. It is faith to accept that word as the word of God, and to depend upon it to accomplish the thing that it says. For of the centurion when he said,

"Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed," (Matthew 8:8)

Jesus said to them that stood around,

"I have not found so great faith; no, not in Israel." (Matthew 8:10)

Let Him find it now everywhere in Israel! Jesus says to every one of us:

"Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3)

It is through the word that this cleansing is wrought. The Lord does not propose to cleanse you in any way apart from His word, but through the word which He has spoken. There, and there alone, are you to look for the cleansing power, receiving it as it is in truth the word of God which effectually works in you, and accomplishes that which He pleases.

He does not propose to make you pure except by the power and indwelling of his pure words. A leper said to Jesus:

"Lord, if You will, You can make me clean." (Matthew 8:2)

And Jesus answered him:

"I will; be clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."
(Matthew 8:3)

Are you mourning under the leprosy of sin? Have you said, or will you now say,

"Lord, if You will, You can make me clean"?

The answer is now to you,

"I will; be clean."

And "immediately" you are cleansed as certainly as was that other leper. Believe the word, and praise the Lord for its cleansing power.

Do not believe for that leper away back there; believe it for yourself here, now, immediately. For the word is to you now,

"Be clean."

Accept it as did those of old, and immediately it works effectually in you the good pleasure of the Father.

Let all who have named the name of Christ receive His word today as it is in truth the word of God, depending upon that word to do what the word says. Then as Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, to sanctify and cleanse it, even so it will be now to the glory of God.

"...Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Chapter 12

Living by the Word

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

Even physically, man cannot live on what has no life in it. Dead air is death to him who breathes it. Dead water or dead food likewise. Whatever we take in the way of food or drink must have in it the element of life, or else we cannot live on it.

So also in order that men may live by the word of God, in the nature of things that word has in it the element of life. Therefore this word is called,

"...the word of life." (1 John 1:1)

It being the word of God, and being imbued with life, the life that is in it is necessarily the life of God; and this is eternal life. Therefore it is truly said that the words of the Lord are:

"...the words of eternal life." (John 6:68)

Whenever the word of God comes to any man, at that very time and in that word, eternal life comes to that man. And when the man refuses to receive the word, he is rejecting eternal life. Jesus Himself has said it:

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my word, and believes on Him that sent me, has everlasting life... [he] is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24)

Jesus used the example of our living by bread as an illustration of our living by the word of God. This thing was not chosen at random. In all the words of the Lord, whatever was brought into them was definitely to teach an all-important lesson.

Physically, we do live by bread--using the term "bread" as embracing all proper victuals. But in order that we shall live by bread, it is essential that it be inside of us. And in order to live by the word of God, it is just as essential that it shall be inside of us.

No one supposes that he could live by buying the very best of bread and looking at it occasionally, or by analyzing it, and endeavoring to solve the mysteries of its composition and how it could sustain life. Yet thousands of people really seem to suppose that they can live by the word of God that way.

Many people buy a Bible of eight or ten times the proper size, with a lot of notes of darkening counsels in it, lay it on the center-table, and pride themselves that they "believe the Bible;" and they really seem to think that by this in some mysterious way they will live.

But it would be just as sensible and just as beneficial for them to buy a beautifully decorated loaf of several times the usual size, and lay it

on the center-table, but not eat any, and then proclaim that they "believe in good living."

Men do not expect to live by bread in any such way as that: and they cannot live by the word of God in any such way. In order to live by bread, everybody knows it must be taken into the mouth, and be properly masticated and prepared for the digestive process, and then by swallowing be committed to the digestive process, that the life that is in it may be conveyed to all parts of the system.

So with the word of God; it must be received as it is in truth the word of God; it must be given a place in the heart as the word of life; then it will be found to be indeed the word of life.

In fact, in the Bible, this very idea of living by bread by eating it, is carried over and applied to the word of God.

"But you, son of man, hear what I say unto you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house: open your mouth, and eat what I give you. And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And He spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe." (Ezekiel 2:8-10)

Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that roll. And He said unto me, Son of man, cause your belly to eat, and fill your bowels with this roll that I give

you. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness. And He said unto me, Son of man, go, get unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. Moreover He said unto me, Son of man, all my words that I shall speak unto you receive in your heart, and hear with your ears." (Ezekiel 3:1-5, 10)

Before the prophet could speak the word of God to others, he must find it to be the word of God to himself. Before he could convey it as the word of life to others, he must know it as the word of life to himself. And in order that this should be so to him, he was commanded to eat it, swallow it, and fill himself to the innermost parts with it. He was to hear it and receive it in the heart.

And this instruction is to everyone who would live by the life of God. Everyone who has taken upon him the name of Christ, is directed to:

"Hold forth the word of life." (Philippians 2:16)

But it must be life to him in the innermost parts before he can hold it forth as the word of life to others.

Chapter 13

Eating of the Word

"Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." (Jeremiah 15:16)

It is worth noting that this does not say, "I did eat the chapters," or, "I did eat the verses," or even, "I did eat the subjects." No. It says,

"Your words were found, and I did eat them"

--the words. Here is where thousands miss the real benefit of the word of God. They try to grasp too much at once, and so really get nothing.

Words are nothing to us if we do not get the real thoughts that they are intended to express. And the greater the mind of him who speaks, the deeper are the thoughts that are expressed, even in the simplest words.

Now the mind of him who speaks in the Bible is infinite; and the thoughts there expressed in simple words are of eternal depths because they are the revelation of...

"...the eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Ephesians 3:11)

With our less than finite minds we are not capable of grasping at once the thoughts conveyed in many of the words of the Bible--we are not capable of comprehending the words of a whole chapter, or even of a whole verse at a time. One word at a time, of the words of God, is as much as our minds are capable of considering with profit.

This everyone must certainly admit who believes and receives it as the word of God, expressing the thoughts of His infinite mind in His eternal purpose. Certainly anyone who professes to receive the words of the Bible as the word of the eternal God, expressing His thought in His eternal purpose, would have to have a good deal of conceit of his own powers of mind to think himself capable of grasping at once the thought of a number of those words.

"Be not wise in your own conceits." (Romans 12:16)

"Be not high-minded." (Romans 11:20)

Do not think it too small a thing for you to take one word of God at a time, and consider it carefully, and meditate upon it prayerfully, and receive it into your heart as the word of life to you. Do this, receive it this way, and you will find that word to be to you indeed the word of life, and the constant joy and rejoicing of your heart.

Do not think this too slow a process of getting through the Bible, or through some book or chapter of the Bible. In this way you will get through it to infinitely better advantage than to run through it

without comprehending it. In this way you get every word, and every word that you get is eternal life to you. For Jesus said that man shall live...

"...by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

This shows that there is life in every word, and as certainly as you receive a word of it into your mind and heart, in that word and by that word you have eternal life. Look again at the words of Jesus:

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)

How do you live, physically, by bread? Is it by gulping great chunks or whole slices at a time? You know it is not. And you know that if you should attempt to live by bread in that way, you would not live at all very long. You know that in living by bread, you do so by taking a bite at a time, and a proper bite, too.

And knowing this, then did not Jesus, in using this fact as an illustration, and in the dependent expression, "every word of God," intend to teach us that one word of God at a time is the way to live by it, just as one morsel of bread at a time is the way we live by bread? Is not this same lesson also conveyed in that other scripture?

"Your words were found, and I did eat them?" (Jeremiah 15:16)

"Son of man, ...eat that I give you." (Ezekiel 2:8)

Eat this word of God. Eat "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Then you will live healthfully and strongly in spiritual and eternal things, just as by eating the best of food, you live healthfully and strongly physically.

Eat this bread of heaven as you eat the bread of earth, and you will find it to be to you in the things of heaven just as the other is in the things of earth.

Chapter 14

Living by the Word: Now

"Now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:21-23)

And "now the righteousness of God" is made known. "Now" is it at this very moment, even while you read. At this very moment, then, the righteousness of God is manifested...

"...unto all, and upon all them that believe." (Romans 3:22)

Do you believe in Jesus Christ "now," at this moment? Do you? If you say, yes, then "now," at this very moment, the righteousness of God is made known to you and upon you. Do you believe it? The Word of God says that it is; do you say that it is?

The Lord wants you to say that what He says is so; that it is so "now," at this moment; and that it is so to you and in you.

"A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you." (1 John 2:8)

When the Lord says a thing, it is true, even though nobody in the

world ever believes it. It would be true in Him, but not in them. But He wants it to be true in you as well as in Himself. And when you acknowledge that what He says is true to you "now," at this moment, then that thing is true in Him and in you.

Many people are ready to admit, in a general way, that what the Lord says is so; they will admit that it may be so to other people; but that it is so to themselves, just now, they will not say. If you do not have faith for yourself, faith of your own, you do not have faith at all, for as you are not living yesterday nor tomorrow, but just now, while it is "now," so if you do not believe "now," you do not believe at all. Therefore the word of God is that "now" is the accepted time.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour "now"? You can answer that in one moment; you know that you do. Then this moment thank the Lord that his righteousness is manifested unto you and upon you. He not only says it, but he gives you witnesses to the fact,--it is witnessed by the law and the prophets.

That law which you have transgressed, that law that has shown you guilty before God, that very law "now," in view of the manifestation of the righteousness of God, witnesses that you have a just claim to this righteousness, and that you are thereby justified through the faith of Jesus Christ.

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of

sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:24-25)

Would you rather have the righteousness of God "now" than to have your sins? You say, Yes. Very good. God has "now" set forth Christ Jesus "to declare" to you...

"...His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." (Romans 3:25)

Will you let the sins go "now," this moment; and take the righteousness which He is set forth purposely to give, and which He "now," this moment, freely gives?

"Being justified freely..." (Romans 3:24)

"Being" is present tense. "Was" is past; "shall be" is future; but "being" is present. Therefore the Lord says to you and of you who believe in Jesus,

"Being [now, at this moment] justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ...through the forbearance of God." (Romans 3:24-25)

But the Lord does not drop the subject yet. He emphasizes the present power and blessing of this infinite fact.

"To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness." (Romans 3:26)

First He says that it is "now" that the righteousness of God is manifested unto all and upon all them that believe; then He speaks of all such as "being justified freely;" and next He emphasizes it all thus:

"To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness." (Romans 3:26)

Oh, poor, trembling, doubting soul, is not this assurance enough that "now," at this moment, the righteousness of God is yours? that "now" you are being justified freely by His grace? "at this time," righteousness is declared to you for the remission of all your sins that are past?

Is not this enough? It is enough to satisfy the Lord; for He says,

"To declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus." (Romans 3:26)

Then as it is all-sufficient to satisfy the Lord, is it not enough to satisfy you? Will you "now" take the fullness of this blessed "gift of righteousness," which is life, so that the Lord, by seeing the fruit of the travail of His soul, shall be satisfied again, and so, by your rejoicing, be doubly satisfied? This is all He asks of you. For,

"To him that works not, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5)

Here is the word of God, the word of righteousness, the word of life, to you, "at this time." Will you be made righteous by it "now"? Will you live by it "now"? This is justification by faith. This is righteousness by faith. It is the simplest thing in the world. It is simply whether the word of God shall be true in you "now" or not. God spoke to Abraham:

"...tell the stars, if you be able to number them: ... So shall your seed be." (Genesis 15:5)

And,

"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)

"Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up our Lord Jesus from the dead; Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans 4:23-25)

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

"Now," "at this time," it is true; it is true in Him. Now, at this time, let it be true in you.

Chapter 15

The Comfort of God

"Now thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ, and makes manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place." (2 Corinthians 2:14)

God desires to make manifest the knowledge of Himself "by us in every place." In order that this may be done, it is essential that we recognize Him in every place. He will not reign in our lives without our consent. It is by our cooperation that all is to be done.

"If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land."
(Isaiah 1:19)

"Willing" is the present acting of the will. "If you be willing," is therefore to say:

"If the present acting of your will is that God shall be glorified that His will shall be done, and you yield yourself to His will, you shall eat the good of the land."

"Choose you this day," (Joshua 24:15)

--each day,

"...while it is called today," (Hebrews 3:13)

"...whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15)

Thus it is that in order that God may make manifest the knowledge of Himself by us in every place, it is essential that we acknowledge Him in every place. To acknowledge this is only to acknowledge the truth. It is so much the truth that it is the truth whether we acknowledge it or not.

When Paul stood on Mars Hill, with a crowd of the greatest heathen before him, among whom there was not one Christian, he spoke the word of God,--that:

"He is not far from every one of us." (Acts 17:27)

"Not far" is near; so that He is near to every man in the world. So near is He, indeed, that He stands at the very door, He will most gladly enter and reign in the life, and make manifest the fragrance of the knowledge of Himself by that man in every place.

The Lord being thus near even to the heathen, and thus near to those who continually refuse to open to Him the door of their lives, how much more is it true that He is near to those who have opened the door, and have yielded themselves to Him. To all these He says:

"I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20)

"I the Lord your God will hold your right hand." (Isaiah 41:13)

"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Fear not therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29, 31)

Yea,

"[Even] the very hairs of your head are all numbered." (Matthew 10:30)

All this shows that nothing can enter your life or mine, of the value of a sparrow, but that God is there to meet it and watch over it, and make it turn to our good and to His own glory. It shows that nothing can enter your life that is of as much importance as one of the hairs of your head, but that God is there to meet it and make it turn to your good. And thus:

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28)

Therefore it is written that:

"...the God of all comfort; ...comforts us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

This world is a world of trial, of difficulty, of trouble.

"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." (Job 5:7)

Such being the sort of world that this is, so long as we are in this world, we shall meet, and we are only to expect to meet, just such things as are in the world. We are not to ask to be kept from the trials that this world presents, but to be kept while in them. We are to ask for grace and discernment to find God there, that we may find:

- His grace in every trial,
- His power in every difficulty,
- His comfort in all our tribulation.

This, too, not only that all the experiences of this world may be made to work for our own good and our own salvation, but also that by all these experiences we may be prepared the better to pass on that salvation to those who do not know it.

Indeed, this latter is the very point dwelt upon in the passage which declares, "the God of all comfort...comforts us in all our tribulation." Here it is in full:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the

Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

As the object of God's comforting us is to make us able to comfort others, it is plain enough that the purpose of our meeting the trials that this world affords, is to enable us to help other people who meet these same trials. In order for us to be a real help to others, we must understand their experiences, their trials, their troubles.

People who are of this world only, have only the experiences that this world affords. But God wants them to know a better experience than any of these. He wants them to know Him. He wants them to know Him everywhere and in all things. He wants them to know His power and His comfort, that will take all these experiences, and turn them to the salvation of those who meet them.

And you and I, who profess to know Him, who have taken His name upon us,--He expects that we shall acknowledge Him in all these things, and that we shall thus find His power and His comfort turning all the bitter into sweet, turning for us all that seems to be against us, and thus be ourselves made able to comfort them that are in any trouble, with the comfort which we ourselves have received from God when we were in the like experiences that others meet who do not know God.

Thus the Lord proposes to cause us always to triumph in Christ, and

also to make manifest the knowledge of Himself by us in every place and to all people.

Chapter 16

The Ministry of Comfort

As a sparrow cannot fall on the ground without your Father, much less can anything fall into your life without your Father. And when anything does fall into your life, it is only that you may be more able to minister to all others the knowledge of God; it is only that you may be able the better to convey to others the knowledge of the salvation of God.

This also is written. Here it is:

"And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." (2 Corinthians 1:6)

* Why was Paul afflicted? It was for the consolation and salvation of other people.

* Why was Christ afflicted? Why was He, the majesty of heaven, made as we are, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? It was for the consolation and salvation of all.

* Why, then, are you afflicted? It is for the consolation and salvation of other people. That is the truth. The Lord says it, and it is so.

Yet many, instead of looking at trials and afflictions in this way, allow Satan to deceive them into thinking that the Lord is angry with

them, and is punishing them for some great sin that they are afraid they have done. And so instead of meeting, in their trial or their affliction,

"...the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," (2 Corinthians 1:3)

--they see only the black, scowling face of a god of vengeance, of their own imaginings and Satan's suggestion.

And thus, instead of meeting God's purpose in being, by these experiences, made better able to comfort them that are in any trouble, and to bear consolation and salvation to other people, they only cripple themselves in them. Let it not be so anymore. Let God be true, and say with Paul:

"Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation;...or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." (2 Corinthians 1:6)

So that whether we are in affliction or in comfort, there is to be consolation and salvation to others in it.

There are on every hand those who are in trouble, those who are afflicted, those who are sorely tried and in discouragement. They do not know God; they do not find Him and His comfort, His power, His strength, His courage. Christians are in the world to convey to these poor, troubled souls the comfort of God. Christians are here:

1. To say to them that are cast down, In God "there is lifting up" (Job 22:29);
2. To say to the discouraged, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33); "be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:6);
3. To say to the weak, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

Christians are here to...

"...comfort them which are in any trouble." (2 Corinthians 1:4)

And now the Lord knows whom you will meet next week or next year. He knows now what will be the trouble of those souls when you do meet them. He wants you to be able, when you meet those souls, to comfort them with the comfort of God.

But you are not prepared now to do that; for you have never had the experience that will be the experience of those souls when you meet them. Therefore, that you may be able to minister to their good when you meet them next week or next year, the Lord leads you today through the experience which you need in order that you may be able to comfort them when you meet them. So that what He is doing with you now by these experiences, is simply making you a

better minister of His grace, a better minister of the knowledge of Himself in every place.

It may be that He leads you through the dark waters that fairly go over the soul. But do not fear nor faint. Jesus went that way before you. And now He says:

"Fear not; for I am with you... I the Lord your God will hold your right hand." (Isaiah 41:10, 13)

"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

I comfort you, that you may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble; that you may be for consolation and salvation, in every place.

This is what the Father did with the Son in this world, that He might bring consolation and salvation to you and me. This is what Jesus did with Paul,

"...for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting." (1 Timothy 1:16)

"It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Hebrews 2:10)

If this is so, shall we say that it does not become us?

"In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." (Hebrews 2:17)

If this was necessary for Him, shall it be that we, whom He has made a royal priesthood, shun to partake of like experiences of our fellow men, in order that we may the better convey to them the knowledge of God?

"For in that He himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:18)

If it was necessary that He should suffer, being tempted in all points like as we are, shall it be that we shall shun the trials and sufferings of mankind, and so shut ourselves off from being able to succor the tempted, to comfort the afflicted, and to lift up the cast down?

No, no!

"As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. ...Receive the Holy Ghost." (John 20:21-22)

"...as He is, so are we in this world." (1 John 4:17)

We are here in Christ's stead,

"[praying men] in Christ's stead, Be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Therefore let everyone who has named the name of Christ say in the joy and courage of a living faith:

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation." (2 Corinthians 1:3-5)

Chapter 17

The Two Sides in the Great Controversy

Self-Sacrifice or Self-Defense

"Self-preservation is the first law of nature." [1]

But self-sacrifice is the first law of grace. In order to self-preservation, self-defense is essential. In order to self-sacrifice, self-surrender is essential.

In self-defense, the only thing that can be employed is force. In self-surrender, the only thing that can be employed is love.

In self-preservation, by self-defense, through the employment of force, force meets force, and this means only war. In self-sacrifice, by self-surrender, thru love, force is met by love, and this means only peace.

Self-preservation, then, means only war; while self-sacrifice means only peace. But war means only death. Self-preservation, then, meaning only war, means only death; while self-sacrifice, meaning only peace, means only life.

Self-preservation being the first law of nature, nature then means only death; while self-sacrifice being the first law of grace, grace means only life.

But death only is the wages of sin; nature, then, meaning only death, it is so only because nature means sin; while life, being only the reward of righteousness; grace, meaning only life, it is so only because grace means righteousness.

Sin and righteousness, nature and grace, are directly opposite and antagonistic elements. They occupy realms absolutely distinct. Nature, self-preservation, self-defense, force, war, and death, occupy only the realm of sin; grace, self-sacrifice, self-surrender, love, peace, and life occupy only the realm of righteousness.

The realm of sin is the realm of Satan. The realm of grace is the realm of God. All the power of the domain of grace is devoted to saving men from the dominion of sin. This in order that,

"As sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:21)

On which side do you stand in this great controversy?

Nature is sin but grace is Righteousness.

Nature is self-preservation but grace is self-sacrifice.

Nature is self-Defense but grace is self-surrender.

Nature is force but grace is love.

Nature is war but grace is peace.

Nature is death but grace is life.

Nature is Satan's domain but grace is God's domain.

Note:

1. Samuel Butler.