

Christ in the Bible

1 & 2 Peter

by A. B. Simpson

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Chapter 1

Words of Comfort for Tried Ones

"Wherein you greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6,7.)

Peter was to be the special target of Satan's assaults just because Christ had chosen him for so high a ministry. But even his very trials were his best preparation for that ministry, and the Master here intimates that when through the discipline of temptation he shall have himself become transformed, it will be his special calling to comfort and confirm his tried and tempted brethren.

How marvelously has he been transformed since that dark night of the betrayal! One has only to read his tender and lovely messages in his two epistles to see how truly he had taken up his Master's cross, and how deeply he had learned the lesson of his humiliating fall. One has only to read further his messages of consolation to the tried and tempted to see how faithfully he has fulfilled his commission, "Strengthen your brethren." The First Epistle of Peter is the best commentary on this text, and we can find no more comforting and helpful message for those who are passing through fiery trials than these letters of hope and comfort.

Peter is indeed the apostle of hope, as Paul is the apostle of faith, and John the messenger of love. The keynote of his first epistle is this word, trial, which reappears in every chapter and forms the pivot of almost all his messages of comfort and encouragement. We have but to read the following passages to find that this one thought is sustained through the entire epistle: "Though now for a season, if need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1: 6, 7.) "For this is worthy of thanks, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you are buffeted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps." (1 Peter 2: 19-21.) "But and if you suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are you: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas, they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that

falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing, than for evil doing."(2 Peter 3: 14-17.) "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4: 12-16.) "Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." (1 Peter 5: 9, 10.)

Let us gather out of these passages Peter's special messages of consolation to the tried and troubled.

1. He begins by giving them the vision of hope and heaven before he says a single word about trial. He tells them of the inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and reserved in heaven for them, before he draws the dark picture of persecution and suffering. When the sea captain sees the sailor boy growing white as he climbs the mast, he always shouts to him, "Look up!" and his nerves grow cool and his fears are assuaged. So the Lord on that dark night, when He was bidding His disciples not to let their hearts be troubled, told them of the Father's house of many mansions and the place prepared. Let us begin every trial with the thought of heaven and the hope of His coming and the joy set before us, and we, too, shall be enabled to endure the cross, despising the shame, and often sing:

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes.
"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall,
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all."

2. It is only for "a season." Compared with that long and happy eternity, the longest trial is short indeed. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Remember, suffering child of God, it will be over soon, and faith and hope can hear the whisper in an undertone, "It is but a little while."

3. There is a "need be" for every trial. It does not come by chance. There is a divine purpose in it all. It is necessary for your spiritual education, and some day you will thank God that He loved you well enough to let you learn to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

"You are in heaviness," he says, "through manifold temptations," and there is a "need be" even for this. How true it is that trouble never comes alone! When the adversary gets your body under, he loves to strike your soul and inject the fiery darts of discouragement and doubt. And you must not wonder if sometimes the trial strikes into the very depths of your being, and you even lose your joy and spring, and fall into heaviness of spirit. This is the hardest of all temptations. "A wounded spirit who can bear?" We are so apt to conclude at such a time that the Holy Spirit has left us or we should not be so depressed. Beloved, this is not so. There was a time when the Master "began to be sorrowful and very heavy." There was a time when Paul had to say, "We had no rest in our spirit; without were fightings, within were fears." Do not wonder, therefore, if your heart may sink sometimes in deep and long depression. There may be a "need be" even for this. Perhaps the Lord is crucifying you to your natural exuberance of spirit and teaching you to take your joy by faith from the Holy Ghost, and so find an everlasting joy which the world can neither give nor take away.

4. Your trial is "more precious than gold which perishes, though it be tried with fire." That is to say, the trial, not the faith, is precious. We really possess nothing but that which has become part of our being. Outward conditions and circumstances will all pass away, but the experience that God burns into us will be part of our life forevermore. Therefore trial is precious because it makes Christ real to us and fixes the spiritual character which the Holy Ghost imparts. Remember, suffering one, that your trial is very precious to Him. He is watching it with anxious and ceaseless solicitude. He will not suffer it to go too far or last too long, but the very moment that the end has been accomplished, He will withdraw the vessel from the flames and give you rest from your sorrow.

5. It will redound to "praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Praise," for we shall thank Him for His faithful love in not excusing us from the hardest and highest classes in the school of experience. "Honor," for it will entitle us to rank in the school among the veterans and to wear our battle scars as marks of highest honor amid the overcomers yonder. And "glory," for in no other way can we earn the rewards of heaven and the glory which is superadded to the grace except by sacrifice and suffering. Salvation is a gift of grace, all grace, and we have nothing to pay or do to win it. But glory is gained by giving up our will, by taking up the cross, by letting go our rights, by standing in the hard place now, as we share the sufferings of Christ, and "when his glory shall be revealed we shall be glad also with exceeding joy."

6. "This is worthy of thanks, if a man for conscience toward God endures grief, suffering wrongfully." Literally this means God will say, "I thank you." This passage is addressed especially to the slaves at Rome, not ordinary servants, but actually bondslaves, the property of their masters, and compelled to do and endure the most trying things at their will. The apostle comforts them in their trial by telling them that some day God Himself will stoop from the throne to thank them before the universe for their patient and faithful sufferings for His sake. What a proud day that was for Admiral Dewey when the nation thanked him for his great exploit! What a supreme honor it was when Lord Roberts knelt at the feet of his queen to

receive her acknowledgments for his victorious campaign! But, oh, what a day it will be when some lowly servant maid shall be taken from the kitchen and seated by the side of the King of glory, while He shall tell the world how she suffered for His sake, and perhaps accomplished a higher ministry in her lowly place than the tongue of eloquence or the gifts of fortune of those who had much higher opportunities.

7. Be comforted by the consciousness that you are suffering innocently. "If, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." And yet some people are always going about telling how wrongfully they have been accused, how cruelly they have been misrepresented, how unjustly they have suffered. One would think that they were ashamed of that which the apostle considers the highest glory. The fact that you are innocent ought to take all the sting out of your trial and make you rejoice that you are counted worthy to be silent in the hour of misrepresentation, to let God vindicate you, and to "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

8. Remember that it is your business to suffer for Christ "for even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps." What would you think of a soldier complaining because he had been fired at? It is a soldier's business to be fired at. And so it is your calling to suffer for Jesus' sake. If you do not like it you should retire from the business of being a Christian. But if you intend to be true to your calling, you must not shrink from trial for Jesus' sake, nor be as eager to get out of the trial as to glorify Him in it. The apostles recognized their persecutions and summonses before courts and magistrates as just so many pulpits to preach the Gospel and they were not half as anxious to escape from their enemies as to have every situation turn to them for a testimony.

Your humble station, your menial task may afford the very opportunity necessary for some special service which another could not do. An ancient legend tells us that one day a lad in Galilee was about to go out with his morning basket of buns and fish to sell for their scanty living. "Mother," he cried, "is the bread all ready?" And the mother answered impatiently, "Oh, I am so tired of this everlasting drudgery. Will it never end?" But at last the little basket was filled, and the lad had sold all but five of the loaves and two of the fishes, and just then, boylike, he began to follow the crowd that was streaming over the hills. Before he realized how far he had gone, he was out in the wilderness, close up to the great Teacher and one of His disciples whom he had come to know, good Andrew, whom he had doubtless met on his village rounds. They were looking for bread for that great multitude of perhaps twenty thousand people, counting the women and children, and they had nothing but this lad's little basket. But as he told his wondering mother how the Prophet had taken his loaves and fishes and blessed them, and given them out to the multitude in pieces until every one had eaten enough, and there were still left twelve baskets, she listened with strange interest, and her tears fell fast, and she said, "Did He really take my loaves and use them? Then never again will I be weary or discouraged of baking bread, so long as I know that I am making it for Him." Some day, dear one, you shall find that it was indeed for Him, and that instead of being a servant for some earthly and stingy taskmaster, you were ministering to Jesus and winning a crown of glory that shall never fade away.

9. Trial affords us a fine opportunity to witness for Christ by our example. Nothing speaks for Him so emphatically as a patient, gentle spirit bearing in silent meekness the abuse and wrong which others may heap upon us, and often we shall find that when we are right with people God makes them right with us.

A good woman in Stockholm had started a nursery for friendless and helpless children, but one of the little inmates was a constant trial to her. His body was diseased, his temper was intolerable. He seemed to have no gratitude or appreciation for any kindness shown him, but was always cross and discontented, while in addition his face was covered with sores, his form distorted and repulsive, and everything about him utterly forbidding. At last one day she had been telling the Lord that her burden was too hard to bear. Just then came to her a vision of her Lord, and she seemed to see Him bending over her with a look of great love and saying to her, "My dear child, I have loved and borne with you for more than half a century. Cannot you for My sake love and bear with this wretched child?" Her soul was thrilled with such a sense of His love that the very joy awoke her, and there before her eyes was the miserable child. But her heart was so filled with the Savior's love that she seemed to love everything else for His sake, and bending down she gently kissed the child. All at once her own spirit seemed to have passed into him, and the little one looked up with a smile that she had never seen before and threw his arms around her neck and began to caress her. From that time the disposition of the child was changed. The Savior's love had touched her heart and she had just passed it on to the little heart to whom she was in the place of God, and she had her reward in the beautiful transformation she saw from that time in her little charge. From that day forward the little one was completely changed, and became gentle, affectionate and even beautiful, and that which had been to her an insupportable burden became an unceasing joy. So our gentleness and sweetness will speak to others and awaken in them the response which our words can never call forth; while on the other hand our petulance and temper will often mar in a single moment the efforts of our lips and lives for many years to bring some soul to Christ.

"So let our lips and lives express
The holy Gospel we profess."

10. It will comfort and sustain us in trial to remember that we are partakers of the sufferings of Christ. Remember when any cross confronts you that it is His cross, that it is not yours, but His, and that it is just part of the load that He has left behind for you to bear for Him. The question is, Will you or He carry it? The apostle speaks of "filling up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body, the Church." The Lord Jesus has left behind something for us to bear, something of His sufferings. Will we take it up and carry it for Him, or shall we leave Him to bear the burden alone? Has He not borne enough already, and shall we not consider it a privilege and a joy to be partakers with Him of the burden that some day is to bring so great a blessing and reward? Doubtless you have heard the ancient legend which has been immortalized in the Polish romance, *Qua Vadis*. It tells us that when the fearful persecution of Nero arose against the Christians at Rome, to which this epistle undoubtedly refers when it speaks of the fiery trial, or more literally, "The trial of burning which is to try you," when

Christians were soaked in oil, set on fire, and tied to stakes in the Roman squares to light the streets by night -- that Peter himself, with a little band of fugitive Christians, was leaving Rome late one night, when he met his Master with a sorrowful face walking back to the city and about to enter the gate through which he had just escaped. "Where do You go?" he asked. And the Lord answered, "I am going to Rome to be crucified again because My servant Peter has fled from the cross." And Peter fell at his Master's feet and cried, "No, Lord, I will go back again, and gladly die for You." And so with head downward he let them nail him to the cross, counting it too high a privilege even to suffer with as much honor as his dying Lord.

Beloved, who shall bear the cross that meets you in your life? Your Lord or you? God help you to rejoice in your sufferings for Him and fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body, the Church.

11. "The spirit of glory and of God will rest upon you" in the hour of trial. When Israel of old came through the depths of the sea then the cloud moved and came through the camp, baptizing them in its folds and making them to realize that God comes nearest to the heart, and often fills it with wonder and praise, when the "peace of God which passes all understanding guards our heart and mind." We look back upon such seasons as the sunlit memories of life and often say of them, "You have known my soul in adversities." Let us claim the promise and "glory in tribulation also," and when God puts us most severely to the test let us put Him most fully to the test also, and we shall find that "as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ."

12. Trial borne for Christ will bring us a great reward, for "if we are partakers of Christ's sufferings; . . . when his glory shall be revealed, [we] may be glad also with exceeding joy." Man loves to keep the memorials of heroic deeds, but, oh, how much more will God treasure up on high the monuments of His people's victories! And some day we shall find our tears transformed to jewels in the crown that we shall lay at Jesus' feet.

In one of the anniversary meetings of the British societies, a wealthy and distinguished layman told this incident in the life of his mother and father, both widely known throughout the Christian world for their splendid gifts to the cause of Christ. He said that when his father came to London, he was a poor lad with his fortune yet to be made. But in passing a certain house one morning, he was attracted by a girl who was washing the stone steps, and with a very bright, happy face, was singing snatches of religious hymns. From morning to morning the lad continued to come that way and often saw the fair vision of this happy face. One day he made bold to ask her to direct him to some Christian church as he was a stranger in the city. Naturally she directed him to her own, and they gradually got better acquainted until that friendship ripened into love and marriage. But he never forgot the vision of his first acquaintance with her and the beautiful spectacle of that humble girl so happy in her life of toil. When his great fortune was made and the time came to build a splendid mansion, he bought the house where she used to work as a servant, and took the stone steps bodily from its front and put them in his new mansion, that he might have a permanent memorial of the beautiful young life that had won him by its patient dignity and sweetness. And so we shall doubtless

find yonder in our heavenly home, such memorials of sacrifice and service; perhaps some old broom or washtub preserved, as the relics of the saints are kept today on earth, but bearing some blessed memorial of the Master's grace and the disciple's victory.

13. Remember in your darkest hour of trial that you are not alone, for He tells you that "the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Finally, the issue of your trials. "But the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you." So, beloved, may we let Him establish, strengthen, and settle us, and thus bring us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, to whom be glory both now and forever, Amen.

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1 & 2 Peter

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 2

He is Precious

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Peter 2: 7.)

The last question the Master asked His disciple, Peter, was, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me?" And his beautiful letters leave us in no doubt as to the answer. It is summed up in our emphatic text, "He is precious."

But Peter tells us a great deal about Christ, and he tells it very completely. His picture of the Master leaves no lineament out, and it dwells most fully on the cruel thorns that marred His face, and the sufferings which Peter himself had once refused to hear about.

I. CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

This is his first picture of the Lord. There was a time when Christ began to say unto His disciples that the Son of man must suffer many things and be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, who should falsely condemn and crucify Him, and on the third day He should rise again from the dead. But Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, and said, "Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you." Then Jesus turned and with terrible rebuke, He answered Peter, "Get behind me, Satan; you are an offence unto me; for you savor not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter never forgot that rebuke, and he makes full amends for his unitarianism in this epistle. Six times he tells us about the suffering Christ.

1. He goes so far with the Unitarian as to hold up the suffering Master as our example that "you should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously." This is all very beautiful and very true. But this is only the beginning. Peter goes much farther than this and soon parts company with his Unitarian friends, for

2. He goes on to tell us of Christ as our Sacrifice and Substitute on the cross. "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." (1 Peter 2:24.) Here there is no mistake about the substitutionary character of the Savior's sufferings. He bore our sins on the tree. Thank God, He left them there, and so died to them that we with Him are also dead to sin and alive unto righteousness.

3. He makes all this plainer in another passage in the first chapter, where he describes the

suffering One as our Redeemer. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God." (1 Peter 1: 18-21.) We hear some speak with scorn of the theology of the shambles, and that it degrades the Lord Jesus to represent Him under the gross imagery of sacrificial death. But here Peter uses no roundabout phrases, but tells us straight and plainly that Jesus suffered for us as a lamb on the altar of sacrifice. We see the precious blood. We see the dying Lamb. We see the ransom paid for the guilty, and we hear again, "the sweetest note in seraph song" and "sweetest word on mortal tongue" -- REDEEMED. Not only so, but he tells us that redemption is God's most ancient thought, and that Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world to suffer and die for the sins of men, so that the cross is really the center of God's plan, and the final cause of the whole work of creation. It is not merely an afterthought or a remedy suddenly conceived to meet an emergency, but Christ is "the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world," and His redeeming work will forever be the supreme glory of the universe.

"You were... redeemed," Peter says, "... from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers." So that redemption is much more than deliverance from a future hell. It is deliverance from this present evil world, deliverance from our life of sin and folly, deliverance from the spirit and maxims of the world, deliverance from the traditions we have inherited from our fathers. Beloved, have we been redeemed from these things? And have we claimed our freedom?

4. Christ as our atonement is still more definitely presented in 1 Peter 3: 18, "For Christ also has once suffered [rather, once for all suffered] for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." This passage is an excellent statement of the doctrine of the atonement. It asserts the once-for-all-ness of that great transaction, the finished work of Christ as a complete and eternal settlement of the question of sin. This passage has special reference to the relation of Christ's sufferings to the justice and law of God. "Christ... once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." There were questions on God's side that must be answered, and problems that must be solved, arising out of His inflexible justice and demanding a settlement of the debt of sin. Had God simply blotted out the record of man's sin without an adequate satisfaction, the majesty of His law and His righteousness would have been compromised. His word would have been set at naught and His authority annulled throughout the universe. It was necessary that He should be a just God as well as a Savior. The debt could not be canceled. It must be paid and receipted in full. And this is just what the atonement of Christ has provided, putting the believer in the same position as if he had never sinned, and not only forgiving his fault, but judging him and pronouncing him righteous through the righteousness of Christ.

Then on the side of the sinner there were difficulties to be adjusted before He could bring us to God. The distrust and dread of the guilty soul must be removed and a spirit of confidence awakened. We must be reconciled to God. And, therefore, "God was in Christ reconciling the

world unto himself." By the exhibition of the Father's love and the place of salvation into which He brings us through His cross, the sinner is brought nigh to God by the blood of Christ, and thus atonement, that is literally at-one-ment, is accomplished, and we are brought to God in confidence and love.

5. Christ's sufferings have accomplished our healing, "by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Peter 2:24.) Our body as well as our soul is included in this great redemption. This is one of our redemption rights. Let us not suffer it to be lost by our default. Literally this means, "by His stripes." His whole body was one dreadful laceration, and in that deadly stripe all our physical liabilities on account of sin were met. Well may it fill us with shame to think what our redemption cost, and with jealous love to make sure that such a costly boon shall not be lost.

6. Christ's death is the pattern of our death as well as the price of our life. "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." (1 Peter 4: 1.) That is to say, as Christ died to sin, so let us die with Him and thus arm ourselves against sin by entering into the fact of His death and resurrection. While in one sense "He died for us that we might live,"

in another sense it is even more true that "He died for us that we might die."

The deepest experience of the Apostle Paul was this: "I have been crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live." There is an absurd story told of an official on one of the Irish railroads whose superior had just died, and who, in sending by wire the announcement of his master's death, did not feel at liberty to send it in his own name, but used the usual form signed by the principal, and running like this: "I regret to have to inform you that I died this morning at ten o'clock of pneumonia, W. J. Brown, Mgr., per J. Jones." There is a real truth behind the Irish bull. The greatest crisis in our spiritual life is when we are able to say with the apostle, "I died today, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me." That is the only way to get victory over sin. So long as we identify ourselves with our past self we are under the power of our old life. It is when we bury it and take the position that we are no longer the person that sinned, but that we have died with Christ and risen again in Him, and are now living His life, we have power over sin, and the wretched man that we dragged about with us is consigned to an eternal grave, and the new life springs into liberty and power.

Such then is Peter's view of the sufferings of Christ, and the vision from which he once recoiled with intense antagonism is now to him so blessed that he speaks of it as one "into which the angels desire to look," and he condenses into a single phrase his intense appreciation of the value and the glory of the cross when he tells us not only of the precious Christ, but "the precious blood of Christ."

II. CHRIST'S RESURRECTION

He next bears testimony to the power of His resurrection.

1. It is the source of our life. He "has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1: 3.) Our regeneration comes to us through the fellowship of His resurrection. We are born again through the fellowship of His resurrection life. We are born again through that life.

2. Christ's resurrection is the ground of our faith and hope. "God... raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter 1:21.) Christ's resurrection is the foundation of our faith. For "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain... you are yet in your sins." He went into the prison of the grave a debtor for your sins. Had He not come out, it would mean that the debt is still unpaid. But when we see Him rise in glory and ascend to the Father's right hand, we know that the ransom has been accepted, the debt is paid, and our sins are gone. Therefore, He "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

His resurrection is also the foundation of our hope. "For if Christ be not raised.... Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." The resurrection of Christ is the pledge of our resurrection and our future glory. Therefore our hope as well as faith rests upon His open grave.

3. The resurrection of Christ is set forth in Christian baptism. "The like figure whereunto even baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 3: 21.) That is to say, baptism does not signify the putting away of our uncleanness by washing, but by death and resurrection. We are so vile that no water can wash away the stain. The only thing to do with us is to bury us and raise up a new life through Christ's resurrection. This is implied in the figure of baptism. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Now Peter tells us here that the ark and the deluge were also typical of the same spiritual truth and experience. The expression is used in the twentieth verse that "eight souls were saved by water." It is not from water they were saved, but by water. The deluge saved Noah and his family from the sin that was engulfing the world, and through the ark his family was carried as by a seeming death and resurrection into the new world, where the race began again its career. So in baptism we pass through a seeming death and resurrection with Christ into a new life. The resurrection, therefore, is the brightest and most uplifting object of the believer's faith. While it is true that we die with Christ once, it is more gloriously true that we live with Him forevermore. Have we entered into the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection?

III. THE POSTHUMOUS MINISTRY OF CHRIST

This is His ministry in the interval between His death and resurrection. This is a part of His work of which Peter is almost the exclusive witness. It is true the Apostle Paul alludes to it when he speaks of Him who "also descended first into the lower parts of the earth." Peter, however, tells

us definitely that during the interval after His death He was quickened in the spirit, and in this state "he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient... in the days of Noah." (1 Peter 3: 19, 20.) There is little room to question the literal reference of this passage to the disembodied spirits of those who had lived in the days of Noah, and who were now in prison in the realm of the dead, the region called Hades in the Scriptures. That Christ visited this region is certain, and that He gave some message there is also plain. That it was a message of salvation to these imprisoned spirits there is no reason to believe, and there is no hint of it anywhere in the Scriptures. The word translated "preached" here is not the word usually employed for the preaching of the Gospel, but it literally means to herald, to give a proclamation. It is not difficult for us to surmise what He might have proclaimed in the realms of the dead. These souls had heard the Gospel for a hundred and twenty years in the days of Noah, and rejected it with scorn while God's Spirit strove with men. Now they are informed by the authority of the Son of God that the message which they rejected and ridiculed is true, and has been at last fulfilled, and the testimony of Noah is vindicated. At the same time how natural it would be for Him to proclaim to the other spirits in Hades that had died in faith and waited for His coming, that at last the great redemption was complete, that sin was canceled, that death was conquered, and that He was about to open their prison doors and lead their captivity captive, and take them up with Him to heaven, to which He was about to ascend and open its portals henceforth to all believers. When He did ascend to heaven, we know He took with Him these captive spirits; and since that time the souls of believers, like Stephen, no longer pass into Hades to wait for their reward, but pass immediately into glory and are with Jesus Christ Himself in heaven, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies and their full inheritance and reward at His second coming.

IV. THE EXALTATION AND GLORIOUS SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST

1. His ascension and exaltation. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter 3:22.) This is the picture of His present high priestly and kingly work. There He sits in the place of supreme authority and power; Head over all things for His body, the Church, every angel at His bidding, every authority and law in the universe subject to His command or suspension, and every power available for the help of His redeemed people.

2. His coming again in glory. It is only necessary to quote the apostle's repeated references to this blessed hope. In 1 Peter 1: 7, He tells us that our trial "might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." In 1 Peter 4: 13, we are told that "when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy"; and in 1 Peter 5: 4, the faithful minister of Christ is reminded that "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." Thus we see that the blessed hope of the Lord's return was very clear to Peter's mind, and very dear to his affection and his hope.

V. HIS RELATION TO THE CHURCH AS THE CHIEF CORNER STONE

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.... Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believes on

him shall not be confounded." (1 Peter 2: 4, 6.) It is recorded as a Jewish legend that when the temple of Solomon was being reared with noise-less hands, each prepared stone and timber being simply adjusted to its place, one stone of singular form was laid aside as unsuited to any place that they had found for it. After a while it became covered up with refuse and was known as the stone which the builders rejected. But later a niche was found on the principal corner that no stone would fit, and then they looked up this rejected stone and found it was the chief cornerstone, and the one designed to fill this place and connect together the two walls, and thus make the building one. And so it came to be a proverb among the Jews that the stone which the builders rejected is made the head of the corner. Our Lord applied the proverb to Himself. And well He might. For it is in Him that all the parts of the building are united and compacted and grow together into an holy temple in the Lord. It is as we are united to Him that we are attached to each other, and all Christian unity depends upon oneness with the Lord. The nearer we grow to the Master's heart, the closer will we stand heart to heart in unison with each other. The secret of Christian union is not platforms, creeds, or even cooperative work, but it is one life, one heart, one spirit, in the fellowship and love of Jesus Christ.

VI. HIS RELATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER

"Unto you therefore which believe he is precious." (1 Peter 2: 7.) Literally this means as in the revised version, "Unto you which believe he is the preciousness." He is called in the previous passage the precious stone of God's election. Now His preciousness passes over to you who believe. His merits are imparted to you, and His rights and glories become yours also. And thus "you also, as lively [living] stones" are built up into Him and become as precious as He. Just as when the iron touches the magnet it becomes partaker of its magnetism and in turn a magnet, too, so the soul that is united to Christ partakes with Him of His divine purity and power, and is no longer earthly and common, but precious and divine. Peter is undoubtedly referring to the interview between him and his Master when he was first called. "You are Simon the son of Jona," the Lord had said. That is, you are but a piece of earthly clay. But "you shall be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." That is, your nature shall be transformed by contact with Me, until you shall become part of the living Rock, which the word Peter signifies. And so we find in the vision of the New Jerusalem that Peter and the apostles of the Lamb are there as precious stones laid first on the corner Stone, Jesus Christ, and reflecting all His transcendent glory. This, then, is the meaning of the preciousness of Christ. It is not only that He is dear to us, for that is ineffably true, but rather that we are dear to God even as He, that we share His preciousness, shine in His beauty, stand in His merits, and shall be partakers of His glory.

"All that He has shall be mine,
 All that He is I shall be;
 Robed in His glory divine,
 I shall be even as He."

VII. HIS RELATION TO THE UNBELIEVER

"And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed." (1 Peter 2: 8.) If you reject this precious Savior, if you miss this supreme opportunity, if you pervert the grace of God and make it only an occasion for your idle criticism, Christ will become to you as great a curse as He might have been a blessing. "Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken," but, oh, there is something immeasurably worse, "On whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

Christ in the Bible

1 & 2 Peter

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 3

Our High Calling in Christ

"I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims." (1 Peter 2: 11.)

Peter has told us about Christ. Now, what has he to tell us about ourselves? His first epistle contains a number of significant titles and attributes of the believer.

1. Strangers. "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered," etc. (1 Peter 1: 1.) This applies primarily to the Jews, as Peter was especially the apostle of the dispersion. How truly they may be called "strangers scattered abroad," a land without a people, a people without a land!

"Tribes of the wandering foot and weary breast,
Where shall you fly away and be at rest?
The wood dove has her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind his country, Israel but the grave."

But the term also applies to the Christian of Gentile as well as of Jewish blood. This is not our home. We are strangers here, or should be.

2. Elect. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 1: 2.) Though strangers and aliens, for whom the world has no more place than for their Master, they are of great value to God, and they have been chosen and selected out of the great mass of the human family for the work of grace and the destiny of glory. But their election is not arbitrary and apart from their personal character and conduct. No man can plant his feet in dogmatic willfulness on the decrees of God and say, "If I am elected, I will be saved, whatever I do," for the Lord Jesus has given us the first test of our election in these simple words, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me," and if we have not come to Christ, it is as idle to talk about our election, as for a man to expect a civic election until he has first become a candidate. Then the apostle Peter has told us here that our election is through sanctification and to obedience. If, therefore, we are not receiving the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit and walking in obedience to Christ, we have no right to claim our election. The last phrase, "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," has a special application to the deeper work of our sanctification. The shed blood was the special symbol of Christ's atonement for our guilt. The sprinkled blood, applied in every case of fresh defilement, stands for the cleansing efficacy of that precious blood. God has called us, therefore, not to an absolute destiny so much as to a high and holy

character, and we are to make our calling and election sure by claiming all the privileges of grace and giving all diligence to walk in all the will of God.

3. Begotten, born again, newborn babes (1 Peter 1: 3, 23; 2: 2.) This is translated literally, "regenerated." It refers, of course, to the work of the Holy Ghost, through which we become the children of God and partakers of the new life, and without which our Lord has told us that we shall neither see nor enter into the kingdom of God. But in the third of these passages is a special and most beautiful sense intended by the phrase, "as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." The idea is not that at a certain stage of our experience we are to be newborn babes, but that this is to characterize our whole Christian life, and that the ideal spirit of the child of God is the simplicity, sincerity, docility, and sweetness of the little child. We are not to be childish, but we are to be childlike. The ordinary conception of Christian life looks back to the halcyon days when we first believed as a springtime that will never come again. We speak and sing of

"The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in its earliest love."

But our Lord severely rebukes the Ephesian church because it had left its first love, and He means surely to imply that we should never lose the tenderness of the newborn babe. This will keep us surely, as the apostle so well expresses it, from "all guile, and hypocrisies and envies, and all evil speaking."

4. Obedient children. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1: 14-16.) Literally this verse means, "As the children of obedience." That is, it is so natural to them to obey that they are, as it were, born of the spirit of obedience. The following verse suggests also the idea of imitating the Father. "As he which has called us is holy, so be you holy." It is the same thought expressed by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5: 1, R.V., "Be you therefore imitators of God as dear children." Obedience should be instinctive with us as God's children. This is also suggested in the next term attributed to believers.

5. Servants. "As the servants of God." (1 Peter 2:16.) Literally this is "as the slaves of God." Our ideas of service were unknown in classical times. A servant was a slave, his master's property, and belonged to him absolutely for purposes of pleasure, gain, or even crime. The apostle did not announce a crusade against slavery, though it was wrong in a hundredfold more aggravated sense than modern slavery ever was. But he told the slaves to be so true to their masters, and so blameless in their lives, that with well doing they should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Christianity does not call us to great socialistic movements against the wrongs of society, but rather to purify and elevate the individual influence of Christians, so abolishing as it has done, the wrongs of woman and the cruelties of slavery. But from the human relation of the slave the apostle rises to the conception so dear to all New Testament writers, of God's ownership of us and our absolute slavery to His authority and will. The term 'despot' is applied to God in this epistle, conveying the idea of the right of absolute

proprietorship and control, and this the disciple loves to acknowledge and accept in implicit surrender and obedience.

6. The apostle now begins a series of figures with reference to believers, founded upon the types of the Old Testament and the calling of Israel as a people. The first of these is 'living stones'. "You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." (1 Peter 2: 5.) This is an allusion to the Hebrew temple, and is connected with what he has already said about Christ, the Corner Stone. We are built upon Him and so attached to Him that we become partakers of His nature and His life. Just as you have seen a powerful magnet or loadstone attracting and holding to itself a great number of smaller pieces of metal so that they seem to be part of its substance and are held by an invisible and irresistible bond, so we are attracted and attached to Christ and built up in Him as a spiritual temple.

7. A spiritual house. (1 Peter 2: 5.) This carries forward the figure from the individual stones to the entire temple, and at once brings before our minds the splendid figure of the temple and tabernacle service as a type of our spiritual life. Each of us should be a miniature of that sacred temple, and our whole life a constant offering up of spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For God has said to us, "I will be to them a little sanctuary," and we may so "dwell in the secret place of the Most High" and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty," and have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," that every moment of our experience shall be a rehearsal of the sacred service of that ancient tabernacle. It is a delightful spiritual exercise to come in the secret fellowship of the soul, first to the altar of burnt offering where we lay our guilt and sin upon the Lamb of God, and know that we are accepted through His precious blood as a sacrifice and a sweet smelling savor. Then we may come to the cleansing laver where first we see our sins in its mirrored bosom, and then wash them away in its flowing waters. Now we are prepared to enter into the holy place through the sacred door which the priests might enter, and claim the privilege of Christian priesthood. And this leads us to the next of these significant figures:

8. An holy priesthood. (1 Peter 2: 5.) For the priesthood is not now confined to any exclusive class as in the Aaronic line, but we are all called to be priests unto God. And yet that does not mean that all believers really enjoy the privilege of priesthood, although they are entitled to it, for we must first qualify for this high and holy ministry. We are a holy priesthood, and he alone that has clean hands and a pure heart can ascend unto the hill of God and stand in the holy place. Therefore we must wash in the laver and enter in by the door which is Jesus Christ Himself in the fullness of His life. For He has said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." The "more abundant" life is the holy priesthood of which we have just spoken, and the secret place of the Most High where we may dwell as His hidden ones. There stands the golden candlestick with its perfect and supernatural light. For there is an inner light for the consecrated believer which the world cannot comprehend, but which speaks to the finer senses of the quickened spirit, and makes divine truth a vivid reality and Christ more real

"Than any outward object seen."

Next we come to the table of shewbread, a type of Christ our living bread, and find in Him the supply of all our need and the sustenance of all our life. A little farther on stands the golden altar of incense with the censer with burning coals and fragrant frankincense, and the whole chamber of this inner sanctuary is filled with the sweet odors of divine communion, "the peace of God that passes all understanding," and the very breath of heaven. Yes, and even farther in we may enter now, through the rent veil into the holy of holies, and dwell in the innermost presence of God where the Shekinah shines and the overshadowing wings of the cherubim remind us of our coming glory into which, indeed, in foretaste we may already enter. Thus we are a holy priesthood, and in the fellowship of the Spirit offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

9. A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people. (1 Peter 2: 9.) Now just as the previous phrases were all connected with the tabernacle and temple, so this series is similarly connected with the calling of Israel as a people. They were an elect race, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, and a people for a possession. Had they fulfilled their high destiny, they would have become to the world what the four and twenty elders and the four living creatures are to the heavenly temple. They would have represented God to men and become the custodians of His sacred oracles and the leaders of His worship and His work among the nations. But Israel failed to understand and fulfill her high calling. Instead of being a peculiar people, she sought to be like the nations. Instead of recognizing God as her King, and being a theocratic kingdom as He had intended, she said, "Give us a king that we may be like the rest of the nations," and soon her kings and people were sunk in all the gross idolatries of the nations around them. No sooner had the kingdom reached its zenith in the glory of Solomon that he introduced not only the luxuries but the abominable idolatries of Egypt and the world. And God had to rend the kingdom and send its people into captivity and even give over the sovereignty of the world to the Gentile nations, until Israel should learn that her only place must ever be that of a kingdom of priests and of a peculiar people. To that high destiny she is once more to come in the glorious day of her restoration under Christ her King. But now having lost her national calling for the time, God has called His Church to take her place, and to be instead His chosen generation, His holy nation, His royal priesthood, His peculiar people. Let us not forget that we can only enjoy this high destiny in separation from the world; and that when we become like the present evil age, we lose our separation and our glory, and the Lord will have to reject us too. This indeed is the sad picture of the last stage of Christianity as set forth in the Laodicean church just before the coming of the Lord. But while the Church as a body and a visible institution may thus be rejected by her coming Lord, the true Bride of the Lamb, the little flock of His hidden ones shall be kept true and pure as a people for His possession. Let us remember that this is our calling, to belong to Him and to Him alone, to represent Him to the world and to wait for our kingdom and glory when we also shall be glorified at His coming.

10. Strangers and pilgrims. (1 Peter 2: 11.) The apostle began with one of these titles. It is fitting that he should return to it again at the close of this series of sacred names and titles for the people of God. Literally these terms may be translated sojourners and pilgrims. The first

expresses the idea that we have no home here; the second, that we have a home beyond, that we are pressing forward to it and that we are having it ever in view. One may be a stranger without being a pilgrim. A stranger is a tramp. The pilgrim is a traveler. The tramp is homeless. The traveler is going home. Both should be true of the child of God. We should be weaned from the world as a resting place or a goal of final hope and expectation. We are in it but not of it. We have our earthly duties, occupations, and relationships, but it is only a stage on our journey home, and the true heart will often be lonesome for the home beyond. A poor Irish laborer who had spent forty years of his life amid the brick and mortar of the great city, went out to the country for a few days to work at a special job, and one morning as he stood in the field he heard a sudden whir of wings and saw a little speck shooting up into the air, and immediately there came a burst of music that filled his eyes with tears, and sent him to sit down on one of the rough building stones until the flood of memories that song awakened had surged through his simple heart. An American who had never noticed the song of the lark asked him what was the matter. "Oh," said the poor Irishman, "that bird made me think of the ould counthry and the days long gone by." Poor fellow, he had not heard the lark since his childhood, and it made him feel that he was a stranger in a strange land. Beloved, do you know the home longing? and best of all, are you going home? Are you not only a stranger, but a pilgrim too? They say the Swiss soldiers, when they sometimes hear the old horn that calls the sheep and cattle home at night in the Alpine valleys, throw down their arms and cannot be restrained from starting home. Is the heavenly country drawing you? Can you say like the little fellow whose kite was out of sight and someone asked him how he knew it was there, "I feel it pull"? Is your life projected on the heavenly scale? Are your friendships, your ambitions, your occupations, your money, your studies, and your life plans invested where moth and rust cannot come, nor thieves break through and steal?

"I am waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom in the air,
 I am longing for the gathering of the ransomed over there;
 I am putting on the garments which the heavenly Bride shall wear,
 For the glad homecoming draweth nigh.

"I am letting go the pleasures and the treasures worldlings prize,
 I am laying up my treasures and ambitions in the skies;
 I am setting my affections where there are no broken ties;
 For the glad homecoming draweth nigh."

Christ in the Bible

1 & 2 Peter

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 4

Social and Civil Duties of the Christian Life

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well." "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." (1 Peter 2:13, 14, 17.)

The apostle here calls our attention to the duties of the Christian in all the various relationships of life. 1. As men. "Honor all men." (1 Peter 2:17.). Peter had a great deal of human nature in him, and human nature is a very good thing to have if we have the divine nature, too. "Simon, son of Jona," as the Lord often called him, was a real man and had every cord of human feeling and sympathy vibrant. It cost him a great deal to be so human; but when a human heart is divinely sanctified, it is a great storehouse of power. So Peter looks at all men as men. He sweeps the larger circle of the race, and reminds us that in every human being there is something of infinite value, something that God appreciates, something that brought Christ all the way from heaven to die, and something that we can find in every soul and make it a point of contact to better things. It was of this the Scotch poet sang so much better than he lived when he said:

"The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd (gold) for a' that."

It was this that Jesus sought and found when He reached the woman at the well through her heart, and even saw in the little Jew in the sycamore tree something worth saving and transforming into heavenly gold. God help us to see the value of a human soul, and to be able to touch it. It was Lord Shaftsbury who once slapped on the shoulder a poor drunken fellow just getting over a terrible temptation and said, "John, by the grace of God, we'll make a man out of you yet," and that touch of a human hand was never forgotten. The poor drunkard lived to be a man of God and a blessing to his fellow men. Over in Indiana there was a woman who had been the terror of her town, and even in the penitentiary she had to be confined and bound with chains. Nobody had ever been able to approach her. One day a quiet Quakeress called at the prison and asked to speak to her; and as the manacled criminal was brought in with scowling and cursing lips, she simply stepped up to her, and saying with unobtrusive kindness the two little words "My sister," she kissed her on both cheeks. The woman staggered as if struck. She tried for a moment to resume her old violent manner, and then burst into tears, saying that it was her first pure kiss since her mother died, and from that hour she was a changed woman. God help us to "honor all men," and by His grace to find the angel in the roughest block of

marble.

2. As citizens. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors," etc. (1 Peter 2: 13.) Peter had his lesson on the subject of civil government that day in Capernaum when the natural Simon rose in irritation against the tax collector, and the Lord so graciously supplied the money and shared the burden with Peter as he uttered that beautiful phrase, "For me and you." No true Christian can be an anarchist. While there is an extreme of spread-eagle patriotism, there is also a middle ground of Christian loyalty which recognizes the powers that be as ordained of God, and even when they are not altogether as they should be, submits and supports "for the Lord's sake." Especially in a country like the United States, and to a great extent even under limited monarchies, is the individual Christian responsible for his part in good government; for if the people be the kings and their elective voice determines the quality of the government, surely no sincere Christian can be indifferent or negligent concerning his civic duties.

3. As members of society. "Finally, be you all of one mind having compassion one of another, love as brethren, ... be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that you are there unto called, that you should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it." (1 Peter 3: 8-11.)

Here we have a fine picture of the good manners of the child of God. There is nothing among the things of secondary importance more attractive than social grace, refinement of manners, and the spirit of deportment of a true lady or gentleman. The Christian should always be a gentleman. The spirit of Christ will lift the commonest life to a higher plane of culture, and you can tell immediately by the dress and the deportment of the new convert that he has come into the society of higher beings. The lack of this is very sad and very hurtful to the cause of Christ. Fenelon was so much of a gentleman that one of the courtly infidels of England upon leaving his house, said that if he had stayed much longer he would have been compelled by the charm of the French divine to become a Christian. On the other hand, by our brusqueness how much we dishonor our Master, and repel hearts that would have sought Him!

The spirit of Christ will invariably show itself on the railroad train, in the church aisle, in the little courtesies of the home, in a thousand minute touches which together constitute a great part of the experience of everyday life. These things are not matters of temperament or education. They can be cultivated until they become the habit of our life. There is a little tract entitled "The Girl for Whom Nobody Cared." She was good in her way and had no serious faults of character or conduct, but rather prided herself on her independence, met her friends with a careless nod, and never wasted words in social amenities and what she was pleased to consider empty forms. The result was that in due time she became thoroughly disliked, and people avoided her as much as she had avoided them. Of course, it became extremely embarrassing to her when she really discovered it, and she had a good cry and an earnest conference with her sensible aunt. The result was that she took some good advice and resolved from that time to study her

manners as well as her intentions, and deliberately to plan to say or do some courteous thing to everybody she met. The first person was a garrulous neighbor of whom she was always particularly tired. But this morning she set to work on her with her new lesson. "How is Jimmy?" she asked. And the old lady was delighted to tell her how Jimmy had just got over the measles and a dozen little tiresome things that made the mother's face glow with pleasure to find a willing listener, and the effect was contagious. The young lady herself became strangely interested in the pleasure she had so easily given to the other. And so the first lesson was a complete success. A little farther on she met Sissy, the daughter of the washerwoman, whom she was used to pass with a very curt nod as quite beneath her. But now there was a gracious smile, a moment's pause, and a kind word of thanks to Sissy for having brought the laundry so promptly the day before, and greatly accommodated her as she had a social engagement for which she needed her clean dress. Before long she had exhausted all subjects except the weather, but even a kindly remark about the weather, especially in good weather, is more cheerful than a silent nod; and so when she returned home her face was shining and her day had been a great success. It was not long before the girl that nobody liked was the girl that everybody liked, and she had found inexpensive kindness more precious than gold.

A good deal of this has to do with faults of the tongue, and so Peter is as decided as James in reminding us that if we would have good health, long life, and God's blessing, we must keep our tongue from evil and our lips from speaking guile. This, too, can be studied if we habitually remember the Psalmist's prayer, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." In this way many of the weakest and most foolish of God's children have learned to be so guarded that their very silence speaks for Christ and a life of victory as no words could. Let us remember that we are called to dispense blessing. This is our occupation to scatter sunshine and make others glad.

An old Quaker was once visited by a garrulous neighbor who complained that he had the worst servants in the world, and everybody seemed to conspire to make him miserable. "My dear friend," said the Quaker, "let me advise you to oil yourself a little." "What do you mean?" said the rather irritated old gentleman. "Well," said the Quaker, "I had a door in my house some time ago that was always creaking on its hinges, and I found that everybody avoided it; and although it was the nearest way to most of the rooms yet they went round some other way. So I just got some oil, and after a few applications it opened and shut without a creak or a jar, and now everybody just goes to that door and uses the old passage. Just oil yourself a little with the oil of kindness. Occasionally praise your servants for something they do well. Encourage your children more than you scold them, and you will be surprised to find that a little sunshine will wear out a lot of fog, and a little molasses is better than a great deal of vinegar." Be courteous.

4. As servants. "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." (1 Peter 2: 18.) We have already seen that the condition of a Roman slave was not only much worse than that of a modern servant, but really very much worse than anything we know in connection with modern slavery. And yet to these selfish, brutal, cruel masters and mistresses, the Christian slave was to be obedient, and by his conduct seek to win them to higher things. If they were in error, as servants sometimes are,

and were buffeted for it, they were to take it patiently. And there is no higher quality in man or woman than to be able to make an apology with humility and yet with dignity. But if they were innocent, how much more might they endure their wrong and wait for God's vindication.

In the present day almost every position in life involves the idea of service, and more or less of subjection to a higher authority. Let us render this for Christ's sake, even when it is not due for the sake of the person immediately concerned. How it exalts our menial toil to realize that we are working for Him, and that some day He will thank us and reward us before the universe! In such a service nothing is menial or degrading. The motive glorifies the deed. There is no smaller man in the world than he who is ashamed of manual labor or honorable employment. In a book of "The Life of Washington" it is said that riding by among his encampments in military undress, he found a petty officer ordering a small squad of men to change the position of a heavy gun which seemed beyond their strength, while he was coolly looking on, giving orders but not touching the heavy burden himself. The general, unrecognized by the officer or men, sprang from his horse, and putting his shoulder to the wheel soon helped them to lift the heavy load and place the gun in position. Then he turned to the petty officer and asked him why he wasn't helping. "Why," said he, "I'm a corporal." "Then, Mr. Corporal," said he, "the next time you have a load too heavy for your men and want assistance just send for the commanding officer to come and help you. I bid you good morning," and the General withdrew, leaving the Corporal discomfited and the men infinitely amused. Let us take up our burdens with new heart and bear them for Him, who, like us, was a Man of sorrow and toil, and even in heaven is not thinking of His own ease or self-indulgence, but as our girded Priest ever living to make intercession for us.

5. As wives and husbands. "Likewise, you wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning . . . let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Pet. 3: 1-4.) If the position of a servant was extremely trying in ancient Rome, much more difficult and confused was the position of a wife, and the state of society with regard to marriage. Woman was by universal consent regarded as the inferior of man, and the wife of a heathen was subject to much humiliation and wrong. But the apostle tells the Christian wives not to desert their unworthy husbands, but so to live as to win them for God. Many a wife has done this. The Scriptures discountenance the marriage of Christian women to ungodly men, yet it often happens that both are unsaved at the time of marriage; and when the wife becomes a follower of Christ, under these circumstances there are the strongest reasons for expecting the grace of God to interpose for the salvation of her husband. And even if she has made the mistake of marrying against the Word of God, all the more should she repair her wrong by endeavoring to bring her husband to Christ.

The secret of woman's most supreme and sweetest attraction is here in a most beautiful phrase. Her ornament is not to be outward fashion and display, but a meek and quiet spirit, the beauty of the hidden man of the heart, the loveliness of character, gentleness, and love. This is

woman's kingdom, and there is no doubt that many a man would be a better man if he had a different wife. Dear sisters, recognize your calling and rise to your high scepter and noble ministry. While marriage is not the lot of every woman, yet if God gives to woman a true and happy marriage, there is no higher vocation, there is no sweeter or nobler task than to live to be the blessing and crown of another life of which hers is the inspiration and the benediction. "My wife has been an open book to me," said an infidel who had read all other books in vain, and who yielded his heart to Christ because the beautiful life that was linked with his compelled his confidence and won his heart.

And the husband, too, has his reciprocal responsibilities. "Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Peter 3: 7.) The phrase "according to knowledge" seems to require of the husband an intelligent understanding of the partner of his life, a thoughtful love that recognizes her disabilities and difficulties as the weaker vessel, and finds his highest honor in honoring her. The tendency of modern social life is disintegrating the home. The husband finds his substitute in his club, and the wife follows with her receptions and the program of social calls, and, of course, it is his fault as much as hers. A wise wife uttered a well merited reproof of this state of things one day when she asked her husband to permit her to make an appointment for some evening to meet a mutual friend. But every evening was occupied by him with some society. On Thursday night it was the Odd Fellows' Society, on Friday night it was the Foresters' Society, on Saturday night it was the Masonic Society, and on Sunday night it was the Church Society. At last his wife gave him a keen look and said, "My dear, I think in the multitude of your societies you have forgotten one." "What one is that?" he said. "Why," said she, "it is your wife's society."

But the real secret of a true Christian home life is given us by the apostle's reference to united prayer. "Walk together," he says, "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." This is the spark of celestial fire that will keep the altar of home from growing cold and love from dying out in the ashes of bitterness. How many of you fathers and husbands are keeping up the family altar? How many of you are praying every day with your wife? Is not this the telltale secret of all your troubles? Let us go back to Bethel and dwell there, and God will love and bless the dwellings of Jacob as well as the tabernacles of Zion.

Dr. Norman McLeod tells of a father that burst into his study one day with the bitter cry that his daughter had died that morning; and, added the father, "I hope she has gone to be with Christ, but if she has, she has gone to tell that never in all her life did she hear a prayer in her father's house."

7. As Christian brethren. "Love as brethren." (1 Peter 3: 8.) "Use hospitality one to another." (1 Peter 4:9.) "Yes, all of you be subject one to another." (1 Peter 5: 5.) "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.) These are some of the social obligations of the disciples of Christ. Space will not allow us to enlarge upon them now, but the keynote of all is the same that has rung through all other relationships, "For the Lord's Sake." This will make you a faithful

servant to the worst of masters, a loving wife to the man that you could not love for his own sake, a genial and courteous friend, that you may the better represent your Lord and attract others to Him, a subject and a citizen for Christ, and a Christian worker adjusted to your brethren, fitted into your place, and so "Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Col. 3:17.) Lord, shed this supernal light on every common thing until it shall shine in the light of God like the glory which the sun reflects from the meanest bit of broken glass.

"So let your works and actions shine
To show the doctrine all divine."

Christ in the Bible

1 & 2 Peter

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 5

Sanctification

"Be you holy; for I am holy." (1 Peter 1: 16.)

"Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18.)

We have already seen what Peter has to say to us about regeneration and the Christian life and calling. Let us now listen to his testimony concerning sanctification and the deeper experiences of our Christian life and growth.

I. REGENERATION AND SANCTIFICATION

1. Regeneration brings us life, but sanctification brings us "life more abundantly."

2. Regeneration brings us life, but sanctification brings us life that comes out of death; the death-born life which has entered into the crucifixion of Christ, and the power of His resurrection.

3. Regeneration brings us into Christ, sanctification brings Christ into us. "Abide in me, and I in you," implies a twofold relation. "In Him" is to be saved; "in you" is to be sanctified. It is the indwelling life of the Lord Jesus in personal union and manifestation to the soul.

4. Regeneration makes us the subjects of the Holy Spirit's working, but sanctification makes us temples of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. In regeneration the Spirit is working upon us as the builder of the house; in sanctification He has become the resident of the dwelling and enters to abide as our guest, or, rather, as our host, while we dwell with Him in the fellowship of the Spirit.

5. Regeneration comes to us through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior; sanctification comes to us through full surrender and faith in the incoming and indwelling of the Comforter. It is as we yield ourselves to God and give Him the right of way, without a single reservation, that He accepts the offering and makes us His abode.

Now this twofold experience runs through all the personal and public types of the Bible. We see in Jacob the revelation of God at Bethel, through which he became the servant of Jehovah, and then the deeper experience at Peniel, through which he became the prince of God. We see it in Moses, in his first choice of God in Egypt, and then his deeper experience in Midian. We see it in Job and Isaiah; we see it in Simon Peter and the other disciples with their new experience after Pentecost; and Paul seems to give us this chapter in his own experience in the seventh of

Romans, through which he passed into the victory of the eighth. We see it very definitely in the passage of the Red Sea and the exodus of Israel, which represents our salvation; and then the crossing of the Jordan and the entrance into Canaan, which represents our sanctification. We see it in the Passover, which marked the first year of Israel's history, the setting out under the blood, even as we step out from the cross of Calvary; and then the equally marked beginning of the second year when the tabernacle was dedicated and anointed, and the cloud came down and entered in as the Shekinah presence of Jehovah in the holy of holies, the latter representing the incoming and indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the consecrated soul. But time and space forbid enlargement. Beloved, have you also entered into the "twofold life"?

II. SANCTIFICATION -- ITS PRINCIPLES AND PROCESS

1. It is an obligation. God commands us to be holy. We are called to be holy. He will not excuse anybody from holiness. We have no right to call ourselves His children if we continue to live in sin. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." God forbids you to continue in sin. There are no two classes of Christians between which you may choose; there are no options here. Every child of God is called to be holy.

2. The pattern and source of sanctification. "Be you holy; for I am holy." God is our standard, and as His children we must be like Him. No lower standard will pass. We must not aim to be as good as some people; we must not excuse ourselves because we are no worse than others. It is God who is our pattern. "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

He is not only the pattern, but the source. His holiness is the guarantee of ours. He commands because He gives what He commands. Out of His fullness we receive and shine in His reflected light, even as the planets that shine in the light of the great day star.

3. The secret of holiness is death and resurrection. Peter gives it to us very profoundly in the fourth chapter and the first verse: "Forasmuch then as Christ has suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." This thought, this great principle and truth that Christ died, will become a powerful weapon and victorious armor in our experience as we enter into it in fellowship with Him. Sanctification is not the improvement of our natural character, not even the cleansing of our spirit. It is to discover that we are wholly lost and utterly helpless, and to yield ourselves over to Him, to die to self as well as sin, to our natural goodness as well as natural sinfulness, and then receive a new life altogether from Him: Indeed, we are to receive Christ Himself, the risen one, as our new life, and then be as though we had been born out of heaven, and were not the same spirit that formerly lived in sin. Oh, what an inspiration this gives to the new life, to be wholly free by death from the entangling weight of our old habits, memories, and the discouraging sense of our past, and to spring, death-born, into a life of holiness and victory. It is our privilege.

4. Sanctification is the gift of God's grace. We pass over now to the second epistle of Peter to supplement the teachings of the first, and there we are taught in the first chapter and the third

verse that, "His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." He has given unto us this higher life. It is not an attainment, but a bestowal. God has provided the robes of the sanctified, and we simply put them on, and claim His efficiency and His complete provision for every spiritual condition and need. It is now awaiting you, beloved reader, if you will simply recognize your need of it, your helplessness to work it out yourself, and in full surrender accept Him for all that you can never be alone. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and put Him on now.

5. Sanctification comes to us through our being made "partakers of the divine nature." (2 Peter 1: 4.) God is our sanctification. The very nature of God passes into us. It is a divine holiness. Sanctification is not a degree of progress on the old plane, but it puts us entirely upon a new plane, and we pass out of the human into the divine, and henceforth it is not the best that man can be and do, but the best that God can be and do. Therefore, it becomes natural for us to be holy, just as once it was natural for us to be sinful. We act according to the divine nature in us, and our choices, desires, and ministries are spontaneous and free, and obedience is just a luxury instead of a duty.

6. Sanctification comes to us through knowing God, and believing His word of promise. This is very finely brought out by the apostle in the opening verses of his second epistle. "Whereby," he says, "are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature." It is through claiming the promises that we receive the Holy Spirit and the divine nature. We take His Word and present it as a check on the Bank of Grace, and He turns it into the currency of spiritual blessing and actual grace. So again Peter says, He "has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that has called us" not "to glory and virtue," but "by his glory and virtue." That is to say, His glory and virtue, His divine excellency, revealed to us by the Spirit, calls us to the same high and holy character; and as we know Him, we become like Him.

The power by which we appropriate these precious promises and make the gifts of God's grace personal and real is faith. But even this faith is not a struggling effort of our weak will, but the apostle tells us we "have obtained like precious faith." The faith is given, and so from first to last it is all grace. God reaches out to us the fullness of His love and power, and then He puts into our paralyzed hand the energy to reach out and grasp the blessing and make it ours.

7. Once more the apostle's language implies that we enter into this experience of sanctification at a definite moment of time. It is not something into which we gradually drift, but it is a crisis point up to which we come and at which we settle something forever. This is implied in the peculiar Greek tense known to scholars as the aorist tense, used in this passage, verse 4, "Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." We have no tense in the English grammar corresponding to this. It denotes an act accomplished at a given moment in the past, and quite finished. Therefore, at a given moment we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through evil desire; we were delivered from the world and the flesh by becoming "partakers of the divine nature" and receiving "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." We do not drag through a dreary and endless cycle of vain attempts, but we come up to

Jordan, we enter in, we pass over, and we sing henceforth, "I am over in the promised land." Beloved, this is the gospel of holiness according to Peter. Surely, it is good news, it is all divine, it is all freely given, it is all for you. Have you received it? Will you receive it?

III. SANCTIFICATION AND GROWTH IN GRACE

Now we are ready to grow, and, therefore, it is in the second epistle that the writer advances to these higher experiences and bids us to go on to perfection. Had we attempted to grow before, it would have been distortion. We must have a true life complete in all its parts before we can safely develop it. There must be a good foundation and every wall connected before we can rear the superstructure with safety. Now then, the foundation is laid, and so the apostle adds, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith." (2 Peter 1:5.) Dean Alford has translated this, "Because of this thing;" not "beside," but "because." Just because you are sanctified, therefore, grow. Because you have resources, such a glorious guarantee, and divine supplies, therefore, go forward and make the most of them. But notice even in our growth that the same principle of grace must be recognized all the way through. We are not to grow in character and virtue and strength, but we are to grow in grace. That means we are to grow in the habit of receiving, of being more and more helpless and dependent every moment to the end of life; it is to be all grace to the finish, and the more we grow, the more will it be true, "He must increase, but I must decrease."

This is also finely expressed in the phrase, "Add to your faith." You are not to add to yourself, but to your faith. And what is faith? It is just the power to receive from God something which you yourself cannot do or have independently. Faith is just a hand to take His grace. Therefore, the way to grow is just to take from Him in each new emergency the supply needed for that occasion. Do we want more love? When we come up to some hard place where we are wronged, we are not to struggle to work up love in ourselves. We are not to be discouraged because we do not find the love there. We are not to pump at our dry well until we get worn out and discouraged. But we are to do as you would do with such a well; pour a little water in, and then it will flow freely out. Go to God and take the love from Him. Tell Him you are unloving and helpless, and ask Him to put the heart of Christ into your cold heart, and thus add to your faith His love. And so, if you need courage or patience or joy, no matter what, just draw upon your bank account. Use the faith that He has given to claim the exceeding great and precious promises, and you will get tired asking before He gets tired giving.

And now the apostle gives us a very fine and symmetrical portrait of the graces and features in which we are to grow. First he says, "Add to your faith virtue." This does not mean moral purity, for all this has already been settled in your sanctification; but the word "virtue" is derived from an old Latin root, which means manhood, courage, virility. It is spiritual forcefulness. God does not want us good and amiable weaklings, but men and women that accomplish things; lives that tell for God and the race. He will give us His strength and make us good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and "strong in the Lord and the power of His might."

Next is knowledge. Blind courage is often wild and dangerous. Power without intelligence and judgment is distortion. He wants us not only to have the "spirit of power," but also the spirit of "a

sound mind." He will give us His wisdom and knowledge, for "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God . . . and it shall be given him." How wise Christ was! How beautifully we find Him always in order, on time, with a ready answer for His enemies and a right message for needy souls -- a pattern of divine wisdom. And so, by faith we may take His Spirit to rest upon us, as "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord," that shall make us of "quick understanding in the fear of the Lord."

Next is temperance. That is self-control, the power of poise, the balanced character, the reserve force that can hold your tongue, and wait in the silence that so often speaks more vitally than words. He will give it through your faith and through His grace, if you are willing to be taught to be silent unto God and let Him mold you.

Next is patience. That is the power to suffer not only that which comes to you from the hand of God, but that, so much harder, which comes to you from the hand of man. This is the fusing process that burns all the ingredients into one living mass of spiritual strength. No character is permanent, no quality is fixed, until it has been proved in the furnace of affliction. But patience is His gift. The savage can meet suffering with stoical indifference, but only the heart of Christ can stand in the judgment hall or the garden of Gethsemane and suffer long and yet be kind. You will come up to your trials and fail at first, but you will find the unfailing One at your side, and if you will lean hard on Him, He will give you His victory; and through each new trial you will add to your faith patience, until patience has her perfect work, and you will stand "perfect and entire, lacking nothing."

Next comes godliness. This is the quality of the Spirit which crowns the character. This is the upper chamber, the observatory, where we look up and out upon the heavens, where we meet and know God, where we commune with Him and worship Him and do all things unto His glory. It is this which gives spirituality and devoutness to the character, and makes saints like Rutherford, McCheyne, Fenelon, and the souls whose very names crush our hearts with sacred veneration. Into this we may grow by faith, for piety is one of the gifts of God; and we can have as much as we can claim and wear as a divine habiliment.

But there is danger even on spiritual lines. We may not become extreme and selfish. The cloister and the cell are not the finishing rooms for holy character, but the slums of sin, the wastes of heathenism, and the dark places of human suffering. It is here we reach the largest circumference of spiritual growth. There is a circle, a vertical circle, that rises heavenward and takes in God and all the heights of devotion and communion; but there is another circle, a lateral circle, that takes in all the length and breadth of loving sympathy and service. And so he adds two more features to this divine portrait: "brotherly kindness" and "charity." The first relates to our brethren, the love we owe to the household of faith. The second relates to the great world beyond, the unsaved, the unhappy, the sick, the poor, the lost, our enemies, the people that we cannot love naturally, but whom God has placed in our pathway to teach us that great and heavenly grace He here calls charity.

Such is the fullness of the stature of a perfect man in Christ; the ideal up to which God would

have us grow under the molding hand of His grace. Such are the seven colors of this sacred prism -- seven, yet one; the white light of faith and grace separated into the sevenfold graces of courage, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity.

There is a fine shade of expression in the beautiful Greek in connection with the word "add." Literally, it means "chorus." It is a technical word, describing the business of the choir leader who harmonized the music at some great concert in all the parts, voices and instruments, until they blended in one magnificent harmony; many, yet one. And so we are to chorus into our Christian life all the graces of the Spirit until they shall blend in symmetrical proportion, and nothing shall be exaggerated, but all shall be in harmony, and the effect of the whole shall be that our lives shall become a sublime chorus of praise, a doxology to the glory of Him, of whom and by whom and for whom are all things.

Once more, we are to give all diligence to this. The Greek word again is forceful. It reminds one of the finger post which they used to place on the amphitheater in the Grecian games at the homestretch, containing one Greek word, meaning, literally, "make speed." They did not place this at the beginning of the course, but near the end, just at the place where the prize was to be lost or won. There the racers were summoned to the last strenuous endeavor. And so it is after we are sanctified and have learned the fullness of Jesus, that God is calling us from on high to the utmost vigilance and diligence, and to make speed, that we "so run that we may obtain." In conclusion, the apostle gives us several strenuous reasons why we should thus make speed.

1. This will save us from spiritual nearsightedness. "He that lacks these things is blind and cannot see afar off." The reason some people never get a vision of God or deeply realize spiritual things is because they live on too low a plane.
2. It will keep us from living too near the edge. "He has forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Some people seem to like to live on the edge of the pit and the wonder is that they do not slip back again. God bids you press on from the borderland of danger into all the strength and breadth of the land of promise. If you do not, you will find yourself back even in your old sins.
3. "If you do these things, you shall never fall"; literally, "stumble." Would you be kept from stumbling? Then press on. It is easier to be holy than to be half sanctified, just as it is easier for the car to run on both tracks than to run with one wheel on the paving stones.
4. This will make your life fruitful and active, "for if these things be in you, and abound, they will make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful"; literally, "idle nor unfruitful." How little some Christians accomplish for God! How wasteful of time and opportunity their precious lives! It is because they live too low. Get filled with the Spirit, and you shall neither be idle nor unfruitful.
5. "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." This is the crowning reason for a life of devotion. There is a glorious prize and there is a solemn possibility of missing it. I have seen three different persons

land from a great ocean steamer. One landed as a criminal, a prisoner bound with chains, and led away to the Tombs and the dark future of punishment. And so some will reach yonder destination. A second stepped down from the deck on the gangplank, a stranger in a strange land. He was not in danger of arrest, but there were no familiar faces to greet him, and he almost wished he were back in his own country. And some shall reach the eternal port in this way, saved as by fire, but no soul to meet them at heaven's gate; strangers even in the home above. God save you from such a home coming. But I have seen another figure on that deck, his face glowing with pleasure, his eyes sparkling with tears of joy, his hat and handkerchief waving in response to thousands on the shore who were welcoming him home. And as he landed amid the cheers of the musical bands and the shouts of ten thousand voices, they carried him on their shoulders to receive ovations of honor and the highest rewards that his nation could bestow. He was a public servant and had done his duty and had finished his course with joy. He was coming home to his reward. There shall be such abundant entrance through yonder heavenly gates. Shall they be for you? Shall they be for me? We are making our history now. God help us to write it in enduring letters that shall shine in that glorious day.

The same word translated "chorus," in verse five, is used again in verse eleven, and translated "ministered"; literally, "an entrance shall be chorused unto you abundantly." The things you did and suffered for God, the graces of your Christian life which you put on in the earthly struggle, the souls you led to the Savior -- all these shall meet you there, and like celestial attendants accompany your triumphal march and sing your coronation hymn as they bid you welcome to your great reward. Oh, with such an inspiring hope, let us give all diligence to receive all the possibilities of grace and obtain all the rewards of glory!

Christ in the Bible

1 & 2 Peter

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 6

Ministers of Christ

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." (1 Peter 5: 2-4.)

One cannot help seeing the personality of the man back of all his letter. All through there looms up the figure of "Simon, son of Jona," as we see him so vividly in the portraits of the Gospels. And no one can read these last words of his without hearing like an undertone the last words of his own Master to Simon yonder on the shores of the Galilean sea as by sweet, delicate indirection He just barely recalled Peter's threefold denial. Though He did not directly mention it, He just recalled enough to remind him that it was forgotten and forgiven, and then prompted him to higher service than he had ever been trusted with before, and gave him the threefold commission as a kind of salve for the threefold wound of his guilty heart, "Feed my sheep," "Feed my lambs," "Feed my feeble sheep." This is the literal force of the words given in John's Gospel. And Peter carries it out here with such tender, sacred sweetness. "Tend the flock of God that is among you, exercising the oversight thereof . . . according to God" (as the Revised Version translates it). That is just how God cares for us, just how the great Shepherd cares for you and me. "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory, that fades not away." There are three distinct lines of thought unfolded here.

I. THE SOURCES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives." (1 Peter 4: 11.) There is the source of our ministry. It is all of God. There are two points very clearly brought out here; first, the matter of it, and secondly, the manner of it. It is an oracle of God. It is not your own opinion you are to give, not your own ideas, not your own knowledge, culture, or wisdom, but you just stand as an oracle to give the message that came from heaven and that you cannot change or modify, but your sole business is to repeat it, to give to men what God has given to you; the oracle of God, the authority of God, the very message of God Himself.

It is said that David Hume used to go to hear John Brown, a devoted Scotch preacher. David Hume was an infidel of the boldest type. They asked him why he went to hear Brown. "It is a real pleasure to me," he said, "for the man believes what he says, and it is a perfect luxury to listen to a man who preaches what he believes." Someone took David Hume to hear one of the

most popular preachers of the time, and when asked afterwards whether he liked it, replied, "That man preached as if he did not believe a word of it." He went to hear Brown on the same afternoon, and came away saying, "That man preaches as though he got the sentence straight from heaven, and then waited, as if Jesus was standing at his elbow, and said, `Lord, what will I say next?'" That was the testimony of an infidel to a man that preached as the oracle of God, the voice of God, the messenger of the divine revelation. Oh, in these days when every sort of substitute is being sought for the Word of God, give us the ministry of the Word!

"Is this God's Book?" asked a little child of his mother. "Yes, dear." "Had we not better send it back to God, if it is God's Book, because we never use it?" And that might be said of a good many today.

It is very sad that so many modern preachers should waste their own and their hearers' time exploring heaven and earth for some new and original idea, when God's Word is a great mine of yet unexplored wealth and priceless treasure. God will always honor the ministry that honors His holy Word. "Preach the word."

The manner of the message. "Let him do it [minister] as of the ability which God gives." (1 Peter 4: 11.) Not only are we to give God's Word, but with God's ability, with the enduement of the Holy Ghost. We are to give it with the consciousness of our inability, and we are to seek each new message from Him, and then seek the power to speak it. How Paul constantly cried out for "utterance" to be given to him; not merely the truth -- he taught the truth, he knew his message -- but each time he wanted the fire of God to infuse it, the Holy Ghost to somehow put life into it. We may give the same message and it will be powerless if it is not in the ability that God gives. We need the flash of power every time, and especially when we are speaking the word that is to be the creating word to bring a soul from death to life.

Oh, how we need to be steeped in the very life and heart of God! God help you to help your pastor with the ministry of believing prayer, that he may go, like John Brown, with Jesus Christ at his elbow and the power of the Holy Ghost in his heart.

It is said that a church once began to complain about its minister who had lost his power, and when they came to him, he said, "Yes, and the reason is I have lost my prayer book." "Why," they said, "we thought you were a dissenting clergyman." "Yes," he said, "but my people are my prayer book; and they have stopped praying for me, and I have, therefore, lost my prayer book." God give you the ministry of prayer. You will get back just what you ask for, all the blessing you give your pastor. You will wonder how he will meet your difficulties, answer your need, and speak every word you are waiting for, and just because you prayed for him. And so may our ministry be strengthened by the ministry of prayer, and we speak "as of the ability which God gives."

II. THE SPIRIT OF THE MINISTRY

1. It is a humble spirit. If Peter had wanted to tell the Church that he was going to be the Pope, what a splendid chance he had here! Why, Peter, you lost your opportunity; you could have let

all the ages know that you were the first Pope, and that every man who came after you was going to be the lord of the whole Church of God. How could you miss your opportunity! Why, you only told the people that you were but an elder -- "I who am also an elder" and he adds, If I want any higher honor, I was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ." Perhaps he stole away that afternoon after they hung Him on the cross. Perhaps he was ashamed to be seen; but when it was all past and Jesus was hanging there, Peter came around when no one saw him, and for six long hours saw Christ dying. That was his honor -- a "witness of the sufferings of Christ." But he says he is a common elder, an ordinary minister of Jesus Christ the same as they. One is so struck with the simplicity of the Early Church, as Peter suggests it here, and this is the design of the great Head of the Church, to keep it simple, and to honor us according as we honor Him, and lay our heads in the dust at His blessed feet. God give us humility! I think it is the prayer we covet most, that God will keep our spirit lowly and broken. "Them that honor me, I will honor." (1 Samuel 2: 30.)

2. Deep sympathy with the suffering Savior; "witness of the sufferings of Christ." He was bathed in the tender sense of what it cost to redeem us, the Church of God. It was purchased with His own blood, the blood of Calvary, and this should be the inspiration of all our ministry.

3. Along with that, there is the spirit of inspiration, hope, our glorious reward, and also the privilege of being "a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." It is no common ministry, but a high embassy, an honor before which all earthly honors are naught and not worthy to be compared. We are to be glorified with Him and bear away the crown of glory that shall never fade.

4. The shepherd spirit: feeding the flock of God, tending the flock of God. If you have ever seen a shepherd in the Scottish Highlands, or in some Eastern country, you will know something of what this means; the picture of the veteran shepherd dying with his boys around him, while the wolves are howling over in the plain and mountain and valley. And he calls them to his side as he breathes his last -- how sweetly the picture has been given to us -- and they bend down to hear his last words while he breathes them out: "Boys, be good to the sheep." That was the shepherd's last thought. He knew them all by name; he had rescued them many a time. They were personally dear to him; he had risked his life for them. It is the shepherd spirit that loves and follows and personally tends the sheep. Literally it reads, "Tend the little flock." It is not a great popular church, but a little flock. Look out for the hidden ones, the poor ones, those that belong to Him and will stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion. Jesus expresses to Peter the tenderness He would have the elders show to the little flock. "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me more than these?" And Peter answers, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love you dearly. It is not only love, it is tenderness, Lord." But the Lord would not have it at first. He spoke to him again, using the common word of love; and Peter was hurt. "Lord, do you mean to break my heart? I love you dearly." And then Jesus takes him at his own word, and says, "Do you love me dearly?" "Lord, You know I do." And the Master tells him that He is going to test him, so He says, "Feed my feeble sheep." Go and help the people that are all broken up, and are hard to get along with, and are always getting lost and forgetting what they learn and are going astray. I love them best of all, Simon, and if you love me, dearly, that is the ministry that can only be

done by a heart that has been right up to my heart.

5. It should be disinterested. "Not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." Rotherham's translation is, "not for shameful gain, but of eager mind." That is, a mind impelled by such intense desire for usefulness, and such a genuine love for souls that it needs no other incentive for any sacrifice or service. The spirit of gain has so penetrated everything in our age that even the ministry is not free from the danger of mercenary and selfish ambition. The most sacred callings are approached by the men who think that everything has its price. One of our distinguished bishops once stated in a public address in Philadelphia that he was visited in his library by a gentleman from the West who introduced himself as the representative of a politician, and then added, "Now, Bishop, one of your preachers is giving one of my friends a great deal of trouble by attacking his moral character, and we want you to stop him, and I am authorized to say that my friend will make it worth your while." The good Bishop quietly walked to the door, opened it and stood there holding it, while the visitor seemed unable to take in his meaning. "Does it not occur to you," said the Bishop, "that this interview is ended?" And yet, there are less glaring ways in which even the pulpit can be subsidized and its voice at least modified, if not silenced, for fear of offending wealthy and fashionable ears with too plain a message against popular forms of sin. If a man wants to be rich or successful, let him go into some other calling, but whatever else he does, let him not prostitute the ministry of Christ to sordid gain.

6. A consistent life and a holy example are the most potent factors in every ministry. The shepherd never drives, but always leads his flock, and the Chief Shepherd Himself says, "When he puts forth his own sheep, he goes before them." The true minister will always live first what he preaches. The most spiritual messages will be neutralized without a holy life. Piety gives power to the simplest messages and to the life behind our words in ways most eloquent. "Being examples to the flock." Said a native convert among the Indians of North America to an inquiring visitor, "Your white men used to come and tell us about Christianity, about the Great Spirit of the heavens, and His Son Jesus Christ, but we looked at the white men, and they drank like us Indians, and they cheated us worse than we knew how, and we did not believe their doctrine. But one day Henry Ranch came among us, and after telling us about the Great Spirit and His Son Jesus Christ who came to die for sinful men, he laid down among us with my bow and tomahawk beside him, but without a fear, and he slept like a little child, knowing that I could kill him and no one would ever know it. And he awoke and lived among us like ourselves, sharing our hardships and doing everything good, and we saw as we looked at him that his doctrine was true, and that is why we are Christian Indians."

Mr. Spurgeon once told in a sermon how he had been tormented with doubts about the Bible, and at the close of the sermon a wise old deacon said to him, "Pastor, never tell us about your doubts again; it disturbs the weak and doubting. If they think that you are unsettled, they will be unsettled much more. They look not so much to what you say as to what you are." And Mr. Spurgeon told his students never to throw the shadow of their weakness on the flock, but to stand before them in the strength of faith and holiness, and lead them as well as teach them.

III. THE REWARD OF THE FAITHFUL MINISTER

"When the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away"; literally, "you shall bear away the crown of glory." There is no investment like a good life. There is no reward so enduring as that which comes from the souls that we lift up and save, for the reward shall last as long as the soul which is its enduring monument. The mother who launches on the ocean of life a noble son and sees him take his place among the best of men, successful, honored, useful, blessed, and a blessing, has a reward that "fades not away." That life is her lasting imperishable recompense. The teacher who trains some splendid intellect for great achievement, and sees his favorite pupil become the leading statesman, philosopher, poet, or teacher of his time, has a "crown that fades not away," for that enduring life and its wide and lasting influence is his recompense. Thomas Arnold, the great teacher of England, lived in his distinguished pupils, many of whom became the most illustrious names of English literature and history. The soul-winner that leads someone to Christ, and then that soul in turn becomes the instrument in the conversion of a thousand more, has "a crown that fades not away," for as long as those souls shall last, he shall be identified with that service. The millions who are yet to come from the land of Sinim will be the crown of the humble Sunday School teacher in an English village who brought Robert Morrison, China's pioneer missionary, to Jesus Christ. The glory of regenerated Africa shall be the crown of the man that led the weaver of Blantyre to become the missionary David Livingstone. Occasionally here we find the fruits of our prayers and tears, and we greatly wonder at the train of blessing that has come out of some loving ministry for Christ. But oh, what will it be when we meet the accumulation of it all yonder, and when it in turn has all eternity in which to multiply! A modern writer has calculated how much money would have accumulated from a single penny invested at compound interest at the birth of Jesus Christ, and it has been discovered by a simple calculation that it would take a row of fifty-seven figures to count the interminable millions, and the pile of gold that it would make would be bigger than a world -- no, bigger than five thousand worlds! That is the investment of one penny if you give it time enough to grow. Then tell me what the investment of a soul will grow to through the countless ages of eternity! Oh, for a holy ambition to put our lives into such service, not for the reward, but for the love of Him who gave Himself for us, and who will not forget to add the glorious recompense when the great work is done.

Christ in the Bible

1 & 2 Peter

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 7

The Coming of the Day of God

"Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." (2 Peter 3:12.)

We have the apostle Peter's testimony to the preciousness of Christ, the blessedness of trial, the calling and life of the believer, the spirit and reward of true ministry, and now it remains to hear what he has to tell us about the coming of the Lord. His first epistle repeatedly refers to this blessed hope as a matter of course, but his second letter might almost be called a special treatise on the Lord's Coming, and a manual of warning and teaching peculiarly for the last days.

His testimony is the more impressive from the fact that he tells us in the beginning of his second letter that the Lord has shown him that he is not to live to see the advent, but is shortly to put off his earthly tabernacle. He speaks of it, therefore, under no bias of eager personal enthusiasm, but in the most calm and disinterested spirit, and gives them the message of the Lord as one who is to stand face to face to give his own account to God. This leaves no doubt, whatever, that Peter in no degree confounded the coming of the Lord with the experience of death. His going to be with Christ was a very different matter from the coming of Christ for His own. It would seem that up to a certain period, at least, even Paul had almost expected personally to live to meet the Lord in the air, and even John writes in the first person in expressing the blessed hope of seeing Him when He should appear. But Peter has no such expectation. Therefore, his message is an entirely disinterested one, and is one of the Lord's last words to us, the people of the last days. Let us gather up these solemn and impressive teachings about the theme of all others most momentous in these crisis times.

I. GENERAL REFERENCES TO THE LORD'S APPEARING IN HIS FIRST EPISTLE

In 1 Peter 1: 7, he speaks of it as the goal of hope for the tried and troubled ones, and he cheers them by the assurance that the trial of their faith shall be "found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Again, in the first chapter and the fifth verse he speaks of the salvation that is "ready to be revealed in the last time." It is only when Christ shall come that we shall fully know the length and breadth, the height and depth of the great salvation. It is hidden now; then it will be revealed. Again in the first chapter and the thirteenth verse he tells us of the "grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This is the same thought as expressed in the last citation. In the fourth chapter and the thirteenth verse he assures the martyrs of Rome, who were about to be made blazing lamps, by Nero's cruel order, to light the streets of Rome, that when their Master's "glory shall be

revealed," they shall be made "glad also with exceeding joy." In the fifth chapter and the fourth verse, he holds out to the faithful minister the coming of the Lord as the time of his great reward, for he says, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." And in the fourth chapter and the seventh verse he addresses to the whole flock of Christ this serious admonition: "The end of all things is at hand: be you therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."

Thus we see that the coming of Christ was a sort of undertone in all his messages, and is constantly assumed as the ground of warning and comfort, of faith and hope, of holy living and faithful service -- this, the one supreme incentive and inspiration of everyday life, "unto the coming of the Lord."

II. THE TRANSFIGURATION A FORESHADOWING OF THE PAROUSIA

Passing now to the second epistle, with its more explicit teaching on this subject, he first tells them that the transfiguration of the Lord was a rehearsal and foreshadowing of the greater event of the Lord's Parousia. He uses this very term, which has come to be almost the technical term for the coming of Jesus for His saints, when he says, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming [parousia] of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount." (2 Peter 1: 16-18.)

This word, parousia, describes the first stage of the Lord's coming. Literally it means presence," and it denotes, not the sudden and glorious epiphany in the clouds, but the gentle and secret appearing of the Bridegroom for His Bride, the presence which is already drawing near, and which, ere long, shall be fully manifested to His waiting ones as they are caught away when He comes as suddenly "as a thief" to gather His treasures from the earth.

Now the Transfiguration was a rehearsal, we have said, of all this. First, it manifested the Lord Himself in His glory, as He shall come in that day. Next, it brought the risen dead, in the person of Moses, to represent the great multitude who sleep in Jesus who shall be brought forth in resurrection glory at His coming. And further, it revealed the presence of the translated ones, who, without death, shall be caught up to meet Him, represented on the Mount by Elijah. All the parties are there, and the steps that lead to it are beautifully significant of the coming parousia. First, the little company, Peter and James and John, are detached and drawn a little closer to the Master. Then they rise with Him a little higher through the darkness of the night as they slowly ascend the heights of Hermon, and then, quietly, imperceptibly, while they almost slept, the glory has descended, and the Transfiguration is there. So He is calling apart His little flock today; so He is taking them nearer and higher in the darkening shadows of these last times; and so, some night or morn, suddenly they will find that He has come and that they are with Him in glory. Oh, that we may understand and be ever ready for that happy consummation!

III. THE WORD OF PROPHECY BETTER THAN THE TRANSFIGURATION

Next he tells them, chapter one, nineteenth verse, that, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." That is, we have something better even than the Transfiguration scene which only the three disciples saw. We have the whole Word of God, which is a Word of Prophecy, its one burden being the coming of the Lord, and which is more sure than any vision or personal revelation that we could have. From Genesis to Revelation this Word continually unfolds the blessed hope. Even in Eden it was foreshadowed by the cherubim, the tree of life, and the lordship of man over nature. In antediluvian times Enoch was sent with this word of prophecy to proclaim to his age that "the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints." Abraham saw this day afar and understood his covenant as reaching on to millennial times, for the land was given to him for an everlasting possession. Jacob foresaw the coming of Shiloh and the going of the nations to Him. Joseph died giving commandment concerning his bones, because he wanted to have a part in the better resurrection. David sang of it in his triumphant songs. All the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi are crowded with this message. Daniel gives us the whole panorama of history, with this one supreme outlook, and John takes up the thread where Daniel left it, in his grander Apocalypse, and finishes the scroll of prophecy with the repeated echo, "Behold, I come quickly!" The teachings of Jesus and His apostles continually repeat the message, and the whole Bible is a "more sure word of prophecy" from beginning to end, concerning the coming of the Lord. Let us so study it, understand it, and use it, for "blessed is he that read, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand." (Revelation 1: 3.)

IV. THE LORD'S COMING AN OBJECT LESSON

Next, the Apostle Peter gives us an object lesson of the Lord's coming from the Fall and the days of Noah and Lot. There are two passages; 2 Peter 2: 4-9, "For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."

And the other one is 2 Peter 3: 5-7. "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby 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, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

These passages combine to teach us:

1. That a great catastrophe has more than once already overtaken this sinful world, and give us evidence that such a catastrophe may yet await ungodly men. The very strata of the globe tells the story of the Flood; and the Dead Sea yonder, as it rolls its sluggish waves over the ruins of Gomorrah, is one of the gates of hell, and both proclaim the coming of a day of judgment.

2. The elements were ready for the Flood. The waters were there, awaiting God's hand; and so the element of fire is stored up now, and only needs the touch of His hand to involve the terrestrial system in final conflagration.

3. The wickedness of man ripened as the judgment drew near; and so it is ripening again for the last cataclysm. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." As it was in the days of Lot, so shall it be once more. The crimes of violence and blood, the defilements of lust and unnatural crime, these are the increasing signs of our age, and these were the provocations of God's former judgment. The very shadows of our time are tinged with rays of light, for they betoken the coming day.

4. The longsuffering God waited in the days of Noah, and gave the race one hundred and twenty years of warning and mercy. So today, as Peter says, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise . . . but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3: 9.) This is the reason that His coming waits.

5. The catastrophe came at last, sudden, swift, irretrievable; and so it will be then. It was too late to enter the ark when the flood came, and so, "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." (1 Thessalonians 5: 3.)

6. A remnant was saved. "Noah the eighth person," Peter says, was saved, and he "delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." And so once more shall it be true: "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." The little flock shall be saved. They shall be caught away before the tempest breaks. That is a thrilling word in the Master's announcement of His coming. "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21: 27.) But remember, beloved, that the emphatic word is 'they'. It is not for you. God grant that you may never see this awful sight, for "then shall all tribes of the earth mourn." You should be nearer to His side that day. Your word is: "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of man." You are to escape these things. They are to see them, but you shall be above them all.

V. THE FINAL CATASTROPHE -- HOW AWFUL IS THE PICTURE

1. It will be sudden. "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." (2 Peter 3: 10.)

2. It will be awful. "The heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the elements shall melt

with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." The word here translated "melt" means "dissolved." The thought is not that the elements shall be destroyed, but they will be melted, dissolved, and then reformed.

3. It will be by fire as once it was by flood.

4. It will be followed by "new heavens and a new earth; wherein dwells righteousness." This is the Palingenesis, the beginning again, the new creation, "the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," as Peter said once before, in Acts 3:21.

VI. PETER'S ANSWER TO THE OBJECTIONS OF THE SCOFFER AND THE SKEPTIC

The apostle tells us that in the last days, this old prophetic Word will be rejected. The cultured science and philosophy of these times will not believe anything so absurd. Certain schools of science have been telling us that nature is uniform and invariable, and that there is no room for a crisis, for the principle of evolution has been established, and one thing just grows out of another, "and all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." This is a fine statement of evolution, and Peter's prophecy has already been fulfilled in the teaching of these doctrines in our day. That is just what men are saying. But Peter answers them from the simple fact that nature is not invariable, that once already the waters have overwhelmed the land in the deluge, and that once again the pent-up fires of the earth's own bosom or the elements of combustion that fill the universe, will overwhelm the earth and heavens. Science furnishes her own answer. We know that it is one of the late discoveries of scientific philosophy that motion is convertible into heat. The coming of a meteor to our atmosphere sets the meteor immediately on fire. Were one of yonder worlds to strike the atmosphere of this globe, long before it reached the solid earth, the air would be a blaze of destruction. Yes, they tell us truly that were the earth's own motion to be arrested for an instant, that instant would set the whole earth on fire by the sudden shock of her swift movement of a million miles a day. Nay, from yonder heavens science has furnished the testimony of just such conflagration and dissolutions in the realms of space. Years ago, in the constellation Perseus, there blazed into prominence a star of the first magnitude and shone for many nights brighter than any other star in the heavens, and then it faded away, and it was pursued by the astronomers into invisibility. Several times since just such startling things have happened in yonder sky. In the constellations Auriga and Bootes, two such remarkable stars suddenly blazed before the eye of the telescope and then disappeared, and later one of them was rediscovered in an entirely different form floating on the sky as a planetary nebula. What did these things mean? Probably a great sun, perhaps with his attendant planets, burned out in some awful conflagration, and then reformed on a new plan, even as the earth and the heavens shall be dissolved, and then made new. Some day, from yonder stars, they shall behold just such a spectacle. This earth shall blaze into awful brightness, and then shall fade away. New scenes shall afterwards arise, perhaps not only this planet, but also on the larger system of worlds of which it is to be in the coming ages, perhaps, the center.

VII. THE PRINCIPLE OF TIME IN CONNECTION WITH THE COMING OF THE LORD

The apostle lays down a great principle with regard to our calculations of dates and chronologies. "Beloved," he says, "be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3: 8.) That is, we cannot fix the date of the Lord's coming by our chronometers or chronologies. It is fixed rather by spiritual conditions. One of our days may hasten it a thousand years, and one of our decades may mean little or nothing to bring it near. For a thousand years the Church slept, and the coming of the Lord did not move forward perceptibly. In these last times it is being intensely hastened. God says, "I will shorten the days"; and we may help to shorten them.

VIII. THE PRACTICAL PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S COMING

Finally, this leads us to practical preparation for the Lord's coming which devolves upon us in view of these considerations. How may we hasten it?

1. It should be with us a matter of earnest longing and personal hope. "Looking for," means longing for and expecting. Do we "love his appearing"? Are we longing for the Bridegroom?
2. We can hasten it by preparing the world for His advent. "Hasting unto," literally means "hasting forward the coming of the Lord." We can do this by sending forth the Gospel as a witness, for when this shall have been accomplished in all the world, then shall the end come.
3. By personal purity and spiritual holiness we can be ready for His coming. "What manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" (2 Peter 3: 11.) "Seeing that you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless." (2 Peter 3: 14.) This is the personal preparation that He claims from each one of us. It calls for the utmost diligence and vigilance. The language is very suggestive: "That you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." Do not wait until the signal comes to get ready. Be ready. Be found of Him, not flurried and alarmed, but calm, waiting, ready and longing for His call.
4. "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." That is, remember it means salvation to some that you love and that He loves, and some that He wants to have in that happy company. He is giving you another chance to bring them in. Let it be your loving and intense concern that none shall be left out, but that through the long eternity to come their heaven shall make your heaven complete.
5. Finally, the beautiful phrase, "Until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (2 Peter 1: 19), suggests the inner revelation of Jesus Christ to His waiting Bride through the Holy Ghost, as the deepest and dearest of all preparations for His coming. The day star before the day dawn. It means that inner whisper of the Master's own voice, that secret presence of His Spirit in the soul which will give intimation and intuition of His coming even before the world shall see Him. It is "Christ in you the hope of glory." O beloved, claim it, cherish it, and hearken to the whispered message, speaking tenderly, solemnly in these last days to those that are close enough to His heart to hear Him.

"Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."