

Christ In The Bible Thessalonians

by A. B. Simpson

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Chapter 1

THE EPISTLES OF THE ADVENT

"Unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thes. 5: 23.)

The New Testament epistles have, as a rule, some specific quality or characteristic by which they are known. Romans is the epistle of gospel truth; Corinthians of the Church; Galatians of grace; Ephesians of the highest Christian life; Philippians of the sweetest Christian life; Colossians of the Christ life, etc. The letters to the Thessalonians are the advent epistles. The one theme that runs throughout the two letters like a sort of golden thread and appears in every chapter in connection with some important and practical doctrine, is the blessed hope of the Lord's coming. So prominently did this subject occupy the preaching of Paul during his visit to Thessalonica, that when his enemies brought charges against him before the rulers of the city, they made this the point of their accusation, that "these that have turned the world upside down have come hither also; . . . and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another King, one Jesus." It is evident from this that the general impression received from his preaching in Thessalonica was that the Christ to whom he bore witness was a real King, and was coming again to establish a kingdom on the earth. Otherwise there would have been no possible ground for jealousy on the part of Caesar's friends. Indeed, we know from the very first chapter of his epistle that he began with this theme in his first messages to the unconverted, and it was this that awakened their consciences while still heathen, and led them to turn "to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven."

The fact that the letters to the Thessalonians were Paul's earliest epistles, and that this subject occupies so prominent a place in them, makes it very plain that the doctrine of the Lord's coming is not an advanced truth that can only be understood by deeply spiritual Christians. It is one of the primary doctrines of the Gospel, and is part of the very essence of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

I. THIS DOCTRINE IS PRESENTED AS A MEANS OF CONVICTION AND A MOTIVE TO CONVERSION

"You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come."(1 Thes. 1: 9, 10.). It is evident from this passage that it was the truth of the Lord's coming that led the Thessalonians to turn from heathen idols to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is, therefore, a most appropriate message to preach to the unsaved and to proclaim to the heathen. It was a similar message carried by Jonah to the people of Nineveh that brought them

to repentance, and awakened profound and universal conviction throughout the empire of Assyria. Our missionaries tell us that when they announce to the most wicked chiefs of pagan tribes that there is another Sovereign to whom they are accountable, and who is soon to appear to call them to account, there is an instinct in the human heart that seems to respond to such a message, and they are often led by it to deep conviction and awakening. Surely this is the meaning of "the gospel of the kingdom," which the Lord has commissioned us to give to the world as a witness before His coming. We are sent forth not merely as heralds to individual Christians, but as ambassadors to all nations, and we are to proclaim the King who is coming to call them to judgment as well as to deal with every individual conscience and life. May God give us wisdom as Christian workers and missionaries to understand and fill our great commission. If any reader of these lines is still unsaved, let us appeal to you by all the powers of the world to come to prepare for that great day! "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; . . . be you reconciled to God."

II. THE LORD'S COMING IS A MOTIVE TO FAITHFUL MINISTRY

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 Thes. 2: 19.) Here the Apostle bears witness that the Lord's coming was a motive in his own ministry and the inspiring hope of his own loving service for the souls of men. As he tells us elsewhere, he expects to present his beloved people to the heavenly Bridegroom as a delightful trust, and to find in their joy his joy and crown. Our service for Christ is to receive both wages and fruit. The wages are paid now, but the fruit we shall share with Him. To the faithful elders Peter says in this connection, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that does not fade away." And a still more ancient promise declared that "they who turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars forever and ever." There is one sense in which the souls we win for Christ shall be eternally linked with our happiness and reward, and be as jewels in our crowns of rejoicing. Are there any who are reading these lines who will wear a starless crown? Have you been accumulating blessings only for yourself, and will it be your sad record, as a man once cabled across the sea to his friends at home after an awful shipwreck in which his family had all perished by his side, "Saved alone"? "Your heaven," Rutherford used to write, "will be two heavens for me; your salvation will be two salvations to me."

III. THE LORD'S COMING IS A MOTIVE FOR CHRISTIAN LOVE

"The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." (1 Thes. 3: 12, 13.)

In the beautiful series of parables of the kingdom (Mat. 13) there is a progression in the parable of the treasure and of the pearl from the individual to the body. In the first of these two parables the Church is viewed as made up of innumerable persons, but in the second as one beautiful pearl. The unity of the Church must be accomplished before the Lord's coming. He is to meet not a number of virgins, but the Bride. The divisions of Christendom hinder His coming. It may

be we shall never see all the denominations united as one organic body, but we do see something coming to pass which is perhaps God's substitute for this; that is, a gathering together of the spiritual elements of the Church of God in a deeper unity of heart and holy fellowship. They are being drawn to Christ as a mystical and spiritual body. As such we meet in our great conventions forgetting our denominational names, and it is this company whom Christ is calling out and training for the hour of His parousia.

Of course, it goes without saying that all individual bitterness, strife, and uncharitableness is an offense to Jesus Christ and a hindrance to His coming. You cannot expect Him to call you to the meeting in the air if there is anyone in that assembly with whom you stand in strained relations. There can be no adjustments and reconciliations there. You must be "found of him in peace" and love with all men. Beloved, are we ready in this regard for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints?

IV. THE LORD'S COMING IS A SOURCE OF COMFORT TO THE AFFLICTED AND BEREAVED

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This entire passage (1 Thes. 4: 13-18) contains the most comforting and tender picture of the Lord's coming in the Scriptures. Even the briefest enumeration of the point is full of instruction and consolation.

1. We are here most plainly reminded that those who sleep in Jesus are living still, for it is said: "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." If God is to bring them with Him they must be somewhere. They cannot be mere dust and ashes in the grave, for He is to bring them to the earth. They must be real persons, or how can He bring them? And they must be with Him now in their disembodied state in order that He may bring them to meet their resurrected bodies.

2. Next, there is a beautiful provision for the reunion of long parted friends. The dead in Christ are first raised, and then the living believers changed. But there is a little time before the meeting with the Lord for mutual recognition and fellowship. They are caught up together and on the way what happy greetings, what mutual explanations, what tales there will be to tell of the years that rolled between, and the blended experiences of earth and heaven? Then when all tears are wiped away, and all longing satisfied, will come --

3. The meeting with the Lord in the air, and all lesser love will for a time be lost sight of in the rapture of His presence and the welcome from His voice.

V. THE LORD'S COMING IS A MESSAGE OF WARNING AND A CALL TO WATCHFULNESS

"But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober." (1 Thes. 5: 4, 6) . We are here reminded that the saints of Christ shall know enough of the time of His coming to be ready. The world will be surprised, but the Bride of the Lamb will know early enough to be in the attitude for translation. At the same time, there must be no carelessness, but a spirit of vigilance and a

habit of constant preparedness.

VI. THE COMING OF THE LORD IS A POWERFUL INCENTIVE TO HOLINESS

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it." (1 Thes. 5: 23, 24).

"Without which [holiness] no man shall see the Lord," and doubtless this means at His coming. In the parable of the ten virgins, they were virgins who were pure in a sense, and even expecting their Lord, but who were not fully prepared to enter into the marriage because of the lack of the Holy Ghost. This verse contains a prayer for the entire sanctification of the believers at Thessalonica in order that they might be fully prepared for the Lord's coming. The word "unto" should be translated "at," implying not that we are to grow into sanctification in view of the Lord's coming, but we are to receive it as a gift of the God of Peace, and then be preserved in it by His grace so that we shall be in a constant state of preparedness whenever the Lord may come, and we shall be "found of him in peace without spot and blameless." This preparation must be very thorough and complete, embracing our whole spirit, soul, and body, and including our abiding in Him so that we shall be "preserved blameless" and presented "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Such a high degree of grace is beyond human attainment, and therefore it is divinely provided and promised to those who will receive it. "Faithful is he that calls you who also will do it." Dearly beloved, by all the hopes and fears of the coming age, let us receive this grace and be clothed in the fine linen and white, which is the righteousness of the saints.

VII. THE LORD'S COMING WILL HAVE A VERY DIFFERENT ASPECT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

In the second epistle, chapter one, verses 7 to 10, we have the vivid picture of the other side of the advent, the coming of the day of God as it will appear to the unbelieving and ungodly. It shall be rest with us "when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," but for them who "know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," it will be "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." This doubtless describes the latter phase of the Lord's coming when He shall be revealed and openly manifested to all the world. This is not His coming for His saints, but His coming with His glorified Bride and His mighty angels to judge the nations and establish His kingdom on the millennial earth. It is in view of the terrors of that day that God's mercy now pleads with men to meet Him as a Savior and Friend, and not as a sovereign Judge.

VIII. THE LORD'S COMING IN CONNECTION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE APOSTASY AND THE IMMEDIATE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

This is the subject of the second chapter of 2 Thessalonians in which the Apostle endeavors to correct some false impressions that had gone abroad among the disciples through false teachers, to the effect that the day of Christ had already come and that they had been left

behind. These false impressions had been diligently circulated by forged letters as from him, and pretended revelations in the Spirit, and they were causing much distress and disturbance of mind to the brethren. Paul, therefore, takes occasion to tell them that the day of Christ will not come until some precedent events occur, and one particularly shall be fully developed. This one he calls the apostasy; and it is interesting to note some special features of this great movement of evil in order that we may be able to identify it in our own time, and be preserved from the disturbing influences of false views ourselves.

1. It is an apostasy. It is not an infidel movement. It is not a political combination of ungodly men. It is not some organized form of latter day evil, such as Spiritualism, Nihilism, Socialism, Fanaticism. But it is something that was originally Christian and has become perverted.

Further: --

2. It is still professedly a religious movement, for "as God," we are here told, "he sits in the temple of God showing himself that he is God." It is Antichrist not in the sense of being opposed to Christ, but rather being a substitute for Christ, a usurper on His throne. It claims miraculous powers, and signs, and lying wonders, and appears to be a great religious system claiming supernatural authority and power, a sort of vicar of Christ on earth.

3. This apostasy was already working in the days of Paul, and only needed the removal of certain external restraints to work out its full development of evil. It was in the churches in the form of pride, ambition, worldly policy, human selfishness, and all the evils of the carnal mind. Even before the death of Paul and John we find the spirit of ecclesiastical pride shutting them out from their own churches and disciples, and claiming assumptions which already received the severest rebukes of the ascended Lord in His letters to the churches of Asia. Quite early in the history of Christianity we find the very ministers of Jesus Christ contending with each other about their respective rank and dignity, until finally the supreme question was which of the bishops should be the pope; and then the pope demanded a power supreme even above the emperor and the state. This spirit, however, of ambition and pride, was restrained as long as the Roman emperor retained his supremacy, but when Rome fell, the last barrier in the way of ecclesiastical pride was removed, and then there rose up in the place of the Caesars a spiritual power more despotic and even more universal and resistless than theirs, and for half the Christian age that power sat in the temple of God, showing itself as God, and it sits there still.

4. Behind all its religious claims it is the spirit of wickedness, a system of unrighteousness. Its "coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." It is the very mystery of iniquity. It even claims the right to call evil good and good evil. It assumes such infallibility that its dictums and decrees possess all the authority of the Word of God. Even the Scriptures must be interpreted by its canons and must be suppressed at its will. The grossest sins on the part of its numbers and officials are condoned by specious and plausible pretexts and canonized as virtues. It issues

authorized indulgences to sin. It opens the gates of hell and of heaven. It adapts itself to every age and clime, and when it cannot rule the king upon his throne, it can use a democracy, a

political boss, just as effectually. It thrives on ignorance, and the illiterate and profligate are its favorite constituency, and are its most effectual allies and agents. Our readers have already anticipated its name. It is that system of iniquity which has grown out of a perverted Christianity, and has for more than a thousand years been the greatest menace to the liberties of the world and the rights of man. Its form has changed today, but not its spirit. There remains but one more development.

5. It will finally head up in a man of sin, the son of perdition. Some brilliant and perverted genius will yet grasp the reins of its world-wide power and organize it into the last great enemy of God and man, and then it will receive its death blow, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

But the last blow is to be struck only when Christ shall come in His glorious Epiphany, not in His parousia. It will still go on after He has caught away His saints, evolving its most dreadful forces and forms of evil, and therefore, as far as the apostasy is concerned, it may be that all the conditions that must precede the coming of Jesus have already been fulfilled and that nothing may remain except that which is to be precipitated to its rapid ripening by the exciting conditions of the tribulation times. If this apostasy was in the days of Paul a reason for not immediately expecting the Lord to come, today it surely is the opposite, a reason for believing that that great event is near, even at the doors.

IX. FINALLY, THE PRACTICAL PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S COMING IS NOT A FANATICAL EXCITEMENT

This preparation for His coming does not lead us to neglect any of life's duties, but a simple, faithful attitude of righteousness and fidelity to every trust, or, as the Apostle expresses it so finely (2 Thes. 3: 5) : "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

In the days of Paul a class of men had risen up who have never been without their successors, who abused this doctrine by turning it into an occasion for all sorts of irregularity in life and conduct. They neglected their families. They gave up honest work. They fell into fanatical practices, and they disturbed all religious social order. We have them still, long-haired, loud-mouthed talkers, too sanctified to live with their families, too spiritual to defile themselves with the touch of a handsaw or claw hammer, not even to say a dustpan or a wash tub. The Gospel of the Kingdom has no sympathy with such rubbish. The best preparation for Christ's coming is to be faithful in your calling, whatever it may be, and found at your post. The three classes of people whom the Lord singles out for translation are all engaged in ordinary things. One woman is grinding coffee for her husband's breakfast; one man is ploughing or harvesting in the field, and both go up instantly at the signal without needing to go home to change their clothes. The third is in bed, where honest people ought to be at that hour, and is translated just as readily as if he had been at an all-night prayer meeting. The idea seems to be that Christ expects us to be always ready, and then everything that comes in the way of life's duties is equally sacred and heavenly. The old Massachusetts senator was right when he refused to vote to adjourn the legislature, because the awful darkness that had come on seemed to

portend the day of judgment. Said he, "If this is not the day of judgment there's no need for this fuss; and if it is, I for one, prefer to have the Judge find me at my post."

Christ In The Bible

Thessalonians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 2

CHRISTIAN LIFE IN THESSALONIANS

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it." (1 Thes. 5: 23, 24).

We have traced the golden thread of Advent truth through the letters of St. Paul to his early converts at Thessalonica. It will be interesting next to trace the teaching of the Apostle in the same epistles concerning the true preparation for Christ's coming, -- personal holiness. Especially is it interesting to note the manner in which this prince of teachers introduced the subject to comparatively young disciples, for, as we have already seen, the Thessalonians were among his earliest converts, and the Thessalonian epistles were the first of his inspired letters. We shall see that no convert can be too young to be profoundly taught the doctrine of entire sanctification.

We sometimes find that a skillful scientist can restore, from a few fragments of fossil bones, the entire anatomy of some extinct animal that ages ago roamed the primitive earth. So from the few fragments of apostolic teaching that are left us we may reconstruct the ideal of Christian life in the Early Church, and find a high and perfect standard of Christian experience of holy living fitted to instruct, attract, and inspire us to holy imitation.

I. THE EXPERIENCE OF THESE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS BEGAN WITH A GENUINE HOLY GHOST CONVERSION

"Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; . . . And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." (1 Thes. 1: 5, 6.) This was no mechanical revival gotten up by sensational excitement, but a powerful work of the Holy Spirit, producing conviction so deep and conversion so thorough that no affliction or persecution could intimidate them; but they joyfully faced the afflictions of the Gospel and took their stand on the side of Christ and His Apostle with boldness and unreserved decision. Their conversion was accompanied with much deep feeling, and especially with joy in the Holy Ghost and full assurance of faith. These men and women knew that they were saved, and they let everybody else know it, too. It is a great thing to be well saved and to have the strong, full tides of a deep spiritual work carry us from the outset to the high level of an out-and-out salvation.

II. THE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS HAD AN EXPERIENCE THAT WAS FOUNDED ON

THE WORD OF GOD AND ESTABLISHED ON THOROUGHLY SCRIPTURAL LINES

"When you received the word of God which you heard of us," he reminds them, "you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thes. 2: 13.) Theirs was a Bible experience and a scriptural holiness. They had not accepted a system of theology or series of opinions from the teaching of Paul. But behind the messenger they had heard the Master's voice, and accepted, without hesitation or equivocation, the authority of the Word of God as the supreme law of their life. It is a great thing to have an experience founded directly upon the Scriptures. Don't get your theories of holiness from the best of human books or biographies. Go direct to the fountainhead, and let the first principle of your faith and obedience be, "Thus says the Lord." Then your convictions, your joys, your hopes, your impulses, and all your experience will be steadfast, abiding, and effectual. You will be saved from the drift and uncertainty of a mere emotional experience, and your life will become "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

III. THE LIFE OF THE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS WAS A LIFE OF FAITH

So we find Paul praying for them that "God would fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power (2 Thes. 1: 11), and speaking of the Word of God which "effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thes. 2: 13.) They had learned that the secret of a happy Christian experience is not emotional feeling, but simple faith, and that all the graces of the Spirit and the comfort of the Holy Ghost must be the work of faith. It is a great thing to get established on this solid ground and learn to walk by faith and not by sight.

IV. THE THESSALONIANS HAD ALSO BEEN TAUGHT THE LIFE OF LOVE

The Apostle reminds them with evident pleasure, that "when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and love, and that you have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you: Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith. For now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord. . . . And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you." (1 Thes. 3: 6-12.) They were not hard or formal Christians, but simple and affectionate children of one dear family, intensely devoted to Paul, their spiritual father, as he was to them; and loving one another with tender, simple-hearted affection. The deepest Christian life must always be a life of love. It is through the cultivation of the natural and spiritual affections that the heart is opened for God's richest imparting of grace, and it is only in fellowship "with all saints" that we can know "the breadth and length, and depth, and height . . . of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge."

V. THE IDEAL LIFE OF THIS EPISTLE IS A LIFE OF JOY AND CHEER

"Rejoice evermore. . . . In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." This is the Apostle's ideal for them and doubtless they lived up to it. There is nothing that makes our Christian influence so effective as a spirit of cheerfulness, thankfulness, and holy gladness. A happy disposition and a shining face are a heritage of unspeakable

blessing to the possessor and everybody with whom he comes in contact. And a taciturn, moody, discontented spirit and manner repel us like the nightshade and the east wind. The most wholesome, helpful people are the happy people. How we thank God for a few such friends! If you can't do anything else for God and a suffering world, be bright and glad and full of good cheer at least. God help us to "Rejoice evermore," and "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus." (1 Thes. 5: 16, 18.)

VI. THEIR LIFE WAS A LIFE OF PRAYER

"Pray without ceasing." (1 Thes. 5: 17.) There is a great difference between prayer and the life of prayer. Almost everyone prays, but very few pray without ceasing. This is the habit of devotion. This is the altar of incense ever burning in the Holy Place. This is the fragrance of a heart that lives in the presence of the Holy One, and breathes the very life of God. This is the deep undertone of a sanctified life. It is from this that the sweetness, the gladness, the holiness, and the helpfulness come. Lord, teach us the habit of prayer, the prayer that springs spontaneously from the heart, and which neither secular duty, satanic temptation, nor the waves of sorrow, can interrupt, but which is only stimulated by the things that try us, until every experience becomes transformed into an occasion for communion and fellowship with God.

VII. THE LIFE OF THE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS WAS A LIFE OF HOLINESS

This brings us to the heart of our subject, -- entire sanctification as taught in these epistles.

1. The Thessalonians were taught that sanctification was the will of God for them. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." (1 Thes. 4: 3.) With them the holy life was not an option, but an obligation. Sanctification was not the experience of a few exclusive and elite saints, but the normal standard of all Christian living, and the condition without which no man can see the Lord. This, indeed, is the only standard for every age and every Christian. "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." God forbids you to continue in sin. God commands you to be holy, and He provides what He commands. At the same time there is a sweet modesty about the teaching of these epistles concerning holiness. There is no boasting of their own perfection, but it is held up as a standard to accept and press forward to something which, if not yet fully attained, is never to be lost sight of or lowered to suit their failures and imperfections. If they have not yet experienced it they are to be ever as the Methodist book of discipline expresses it. "groaning after it," and pressing forward until they have claimed it.

2. They were taught that sanctification is the work of God. "The very God of peace himself sanctify you," is the fine force of the original here. (1 Thes. 5: 23.) It is God's work, not ours. And this is still further strengthened by the next verse, "Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it." It is part of the provision of grace, and God is bound to fulfill it to us in our experience if we will follow up our redemption rights and the full claims of the inheritance of faith. Just as Isaac's bride was provided with her wedding array and only had to put it on to meet her lord, so it is granted to the Bride of Christ "that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Christ is "made unto us wisdom, righteousness,

and sanctification, and redemption." Let us accept the great provision of faith and put on the Lord Jesus.

3. God has provided entire sanctification for His people. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." The word "sanctify" has three meanings, -- to separate from, to dedicate to, and to fill with; and all these three are necessary to constitute entire sanctification.

There is a work of separation. There are things we cannot consecrate to God but must surrender and leave outside the camp, -- our sinful habits, our old self-life, the things which the light of the Holy Spirit will surely condemn if you let them in. There is but one inexorable course to take here. You cannot give them to God; you may not be able to cleanse yourself from them; but you can consent to be cleansed. You can pass the sentence of death on them. You can dare to say "No," to them. You can give God the right to destroy them, and it is here that the great decisive act is usually performed; and it is here that the coward heart usually fails. Is God speaking to you, my brother, my sister? Dare to obey. Dare to say to yourself a brave, eternal "No," and to God an everlasting "Yes"; and you will find that He has a way of making real the death warrant that you dare to sign.

Then comes the work of dedication. You give to God your surrendered life, your will and all the possibilities of your being. You choose to belong to Him. You say by one great act of your will, "I am henceforth not my own. I belong to Him." You hand yourself over in every power of your being to be His property, to obey His will and to live to please Him. This is consecration. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

But when all this is done you are still but an empty vessel. God has the vessel, but He must fill it with His own grace and goodness by the Holy Spirit and the life of Christ. And so the third and the chief stage of sanctification is union with Jesus and the incoming and indwelling of the Holy Spirit as the continual source of our new life with all its graces and victories. Hence it is a life of dependence on Him in which He is made unto us sanctification, and all the goodness and sweetness of our experience is but the fruit of the Spirit working in us love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Thus sanctification is the work of the Spirit and the Life of Jesus and the gift of God's grace, and our part in it is to receive of His fullness grace for grace, and live out His life step by step as He dwells in us and walks in us.

How simple, how scriptural, and how complete is this philosophy of the life of holiness! Beloved, have you received it? Will you enter in? Will you separate yourself from all that His Word, His Spirit, and your own quickened conscience forbid? Will you dedicate yourself unreservedly to Him and count yourself His, and His alone, and begin to live on His fullness and walk in His Spirit?

But there is a further and fuller specification of entire sanctification in the next clause, "Your whole spirit and soul and body." Here we get a little inventory of the properties that we are handing over. It is a great empire, a human life. First, there is the spirit, our highest nature; that

which knows right and wrong; that which knows God and enjoys His presence; that which is immortal and capable of union with the vine; that which may be either good or evil as it is possessed by God or Satan. This must be separated, dedicated and filled with the Holy Ghost.

Then there is the soul, the intellectual and emotional part; that which thinks, feels, loves; that which has its tastes, its passions, its desires. This must be separated from all that is impure, earthly, selfish. This must be dedicated to God to desire, to love, to think at His bidding and according to His will. And this must be filled by the Holy Ghost so that He shall control our thoughts, direct our affections, and possess and use all the powers of our mind and affections of our heart.

And then the body with all its members is counted in and must be held under the control of a sanctified will, and separated from every sordid, gross, sensual, and unnatural use, dedicated to God and filled with the life of Christ. This will lead to an individual and explicit transaction in which eyes, ears, lips, hands, feet, and heart, every member, will be turned over to Him and become the subject of His blessed indwelling. For He, too, has a body like our own, and He is the Head of the body. The body is for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. He can take these members and cleanse them from unholy appetites and selfish indulgences, and even the humors and infirmities of disease. He can make them strong and pure through the touch of His life, and then give them double power to speak, to work, to walk on His errands and in the ministries of His love. This is entire sanctification, and oh, what a great and glorious possibility it is!

4. "Preserved blameless." Here again we come to an important doctrinal teaching. Our sanctification is not a crystallized and self-centered state, but a condition of constant dependence upon Him who is its Author and Finisher. We must be preserved moment by moment and "kept by his power through faith unto salvation." This introduces us to the life of abiding, and compels us to watch constantly and walk closely with our living Lord. But He is "able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." He does not say that we are preserved spotless, for holiness is relative and none is absolutely holy but God. But we can be blameless. Your little child just beginning to write may make many a crooked scrawl, but if he is doing his best with a true heart and a watchful hand, you count him blameless and reward him because he did his best. And so we may walk worthy of God unto all pleasing, even though the eye of infinite holiness might discover many a flaw in our work.

It is a blessed thing to walk in the constant sense of His acceptance, and it is most depressing to be constantly condemning yourself and living in bondage and self-depreciation. It is possible to come to the place where we find out once for all that God expects nothing of us, and we are to expect nothing of ourselves. But taking Him as our all-sufficiency, and throwing upon Him the responsibility of our life, we just draw upon His boundless grace and live in His perfect love. This will lift us to a higher plane than all our morbid self-reproaches, which do not please Him and certainly only drag us down. Let us rise to the blameless life and dwell in the perfect love that casts out fear.

5. The holiness of the Thessalonian Christians was intensely practical. It was not a theory or a sentiment merely, but it led to such results as these, "You know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, That you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto his kingdom and glory." (1 Thes. 2: 11, 12.) "You were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything." (1 Thes. 1: 7, 8.) What a beautiful testimony! What a splendid witness for God! This is better than all our preaching. Oh, for lives that will sound out the Gospel so widely and so wisely that our preaching will be needless?

The Thessalonian Christians lived their holiness. Their lives were not self-bound, but unselfish, and reached in blessing to the utmost confines of their influence, and so the truly sanctified disciple will always be an active, useful, and missionary force. Is God enabling us to reproduce the ancient type, and to live this sweet and holy life of faith and love, of joy and gladness, of prayer and power, of practical goodness and missionary service, of entire sanctification in our spirit and soul and body unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? "Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it." He is calling you, my brother. He is calling you today. Like the old prophet who dropped his mantle on the shoulders of the young ploughman in the summer fields of Abel Meholah (and henceforth Elisha never could be the same again), the Holy Ghost is dropping on you the mantle of a higher calling. Rise to meet Him. Burn up, as Elisha, the things that hinder and hold you back. Lay yourself and everything on the altar and go forth to prove what God can do with a single consecrated life.

Christ In The Bible

Thessalonians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 3

A PATTERN WORKER AND MINISTER

"For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain; . . . But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts." (1 Thes. 2: 1, 4).

A man's character is revealed by his correspondence. Much more was this the case in the days that are past, before the modern typewriter and stenographer had come in between the full heart and the written page. Then you could read between the lines many a shade of feeling and many a touch of character, which now becomes lost in transmission through our artificial mediums of correspondence. The best biographies are compiled from the heart to heart letters of confidential friendship. Paul's first letters to the Thessalonians are full of such touches, and we can trace without much difficulty a personal portrait of the man behind the message.

First of all, let us remember that it is a man speaking to us from our own level. This is not the traditional priest in his conventional robes high upon the steeple, but this is the man among his fellow men "down among the people," and speaking to them from their own class and their own level. It is Paul working for daily wages at his loom and web of haircloth, and then preaching in his moments of leisure without canonical robes or ecclesiastical titles, but just because a joy and love made him preach the message that had filled his own heart. This is a message for the reader, whoever you may be or whatever may be your calling, reminding you that as you toil at the workbench, the plow, the washtub, or the laundry table, you may be as truly a minister and a messenger of the glorious Gospel as the man in the pulpit and the woman in the rescue mission. The charm of Paul's ministry was its unconventional freedom. Put him on board a storm-tossed vessel as a prisoner, and you soon find him working for the salvation of all on board, and by sheer force of character taking command both of captain and of crew. Put him in a Roman barracks chained between two soldiers, and you soon find the whole pretorium a great revival meeting. Bring him up before Agrippa, Felix, and Caesar on trial for his life, and lo, he turns the tables on his judges and preaches the Gospel to them until they tremble before him. Set him loose in Philippi among strangers, and he will first get a job at the factory to make a living for himself and his companions, and then find his way on Sabbath morning to the little open air meeting by the riverside, and have the leader of the meeting converted before the day is over. No, put him down in the deepest, darkest dungeon in the Philippian prison, and before morning you will find the prison broken up, the jailer converted, and the magistrates begging him to leave and help them out of the dilemma into which his arrest has brought them. In fact there was no possible situation where Paul did not manage to find service and turn the

situation into an opportunity to witness for Jesus Christ.

Let us look a little more closely at the spirit of his ministry.

I. HIS AIM AND MOTIVE WERE SINGLE AND SUPREME CONSECRATION TO GOD

"But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which tries our hearts. Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others." (1 Thes. 2: 4, 6.) He had but one Master to please and one purpose to fulfill, like the railroad employe who had refused to accommodate a lot of passengers by suspending one of the rules of the company for their accommodation, and when told by the crowd that there was no danger of his being spoiled by popularity, answered, "The only man with whom I wish to be popular is the man who employs me." This was the secret of Paul's courage and faithfulness. He tried to please God only. We are living in an age when it is very difficult for the ministers of Christ to be true to God and popular even with the religious world. No man can stand in a pulpit today and bear faithful testimony against the social, political, and commercial wrongs represented in the average congregation, without becoming a bore and an offense, and sacrificing his worldly advantages. But Paul had died to all these things, and so he could afford to speak of God whether men would hear or forbear. May the Holy Spirit make us true to our testimony and to our Master.

II. HIS PERSONAL LIFE

His personal life was pure and blameless and he could appeal to them and say, "You are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe." (1 Thes. 2: 10.)

Our life is more powerful than our eloquence and wisdom. We can only give to others that which we have personally lived. Men soon detect the professional talker and the unreal life. They make burning glasses out of pieces of ice, but you cannot set fire to human hearts until you yourself are first on fire:

You must yourself be true
If you the truth would teach;
It needs the overflowing heart
To give the lips full speech.

The most eloquent address will be neutralized by one flash of angry temper or one fall into sin. Living epistles, "known and read of all men," are the messages which each of us can hold forth before a world that often reads no other message and hears no other Gospel. God help us to so live that we shall "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

III. MANLY INDEPENDENCE OF ALL MERCENARY METHODS

Paul gloried in but one thing in his ministry, and that was that he could preach the Gospel

without charge and say to his fellow disciples, "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labor and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example unto you to follow us."

Many people are tempted to think that they should give up business and go into what they call mission work, where somebody else would support them while they give all their time to direct religious service. It would be well for these friends to take a good look at the example of Paul, and remember how many of His servants God has used without taking them from the vocations of secular life. Think of Daniel, the statesman of Babylon; Nehemiah, the courtier of Persia; Barnabas, the consecrated merchant; and Paul, the weaver, who just found a pulpit in their ordinary business life, and preached the Gospel to their fellow men from their own level. It is a blessed advantage to look in the face of the world and say no man has hired me to preach. "These hands have ministered to my necessity." Such a testimony has a dignity and a force that even the world can fully appreciate. There is nothing wrong in receiving a salary in the ministry of the Gospel if God has called you to that place. But if God has placed you in a business station, think well before you fly from it to a more conventional ministry, and remember the words of the Apostle in another place, "Let every man abide in the calling wherein he was called. . . . Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." In the midst of the trials, temptations, and conflicts of business life you get in touch with men as the professional preacher never can. You understand their needs, and they can feel that you understand them. You can speak with an authority born of experience, and help them heart to heart and hand in hand as mere preaching never could.

The methods of financial support in some lines of Christian work are a great reproach to the cause of Christ. It is always painful to see the Christian worker going around with his hat soliciting help for the Mighty One who owns the cattle upon a thousand hills, and says that the silver and gold are His. There are so many ways of doing this and so many temptations to do it, that we cannot be too careful in maintaining our dignity and independence. Often have I been humiliated to see some modest girl obliged to go to coarse and godless men of the world in the business offices of India, and beg for a few coins to help them preach the Gospel. The coins were often given, but with a leer and a jest which must have gone with a pang to the Master's heart. It is all right for God's people to give to the support of the Gospel, but they should do it voluntarily as a debt which no gift ever can repay, and never put the ministry of Christ in the humiliating position of asking for charity.

In these last days when God wants messengers on irregular lines, let us not be surprised if He often takes people just as He finds them, and makes use of the rod of Moses, the ox goad of Shamgar, the needle and thread of Dorcas, and the loom of Paul, as instruments for His boldest and most effective messages to a world that is itself absorbed in business cares and seldom goes off the secular plane to hear the conventional message. Thank God for the laymen of our age whom the Holy Ghost has ordained to a higher ministry than even the touch of human hands could have bestowed.

IV. PRAYER

The secret of Paul's power as a Christian worker and minister is found in the closet. He was always praying for his converts and getting them to pray for him. "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." (1 Thes. 1: 2, 3.) "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." (1 Thes. 3: 10.) And so on the other hand he begs them to pray for him, "that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified even as it is with you: And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men." (2 Thes. 3: 1, 2.) If we turn to the eighteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we shall see how this prayer was marvelously fulfilled in the deliverance of Paul from the persecutions of the Jews even after he had been dragged before the judgment seat of Gallio by Sosthenes and the Jewish mob of his persecutors. Gallio dismissed the charge with contempt and drove the accusers from his judgment seat, while the mob, ever ready to turn upon the beaten party, attacks Sosthenes instead of Paul; and to complete the revenge of the Apostle we find him writing to these very Corinthians a few years later and including Sosthenes with himself in the dedication of the epistle as "Sosthenes our brother." That looks as though he were no ordinary brother, but there was a history behind him. What a splendid revenge of love it would be if after his failure and his beating Paul became his protector and friend, and led him to the Savior that once he opposed, and accepted him as the fellow-worker in the church at Corinth! Surely this would be an answer to the prayers of the Thessalonians worthy of the things God loves to do for those that trust Him. This must ever be the deep secret of spiritual power. Our work must be born in prayer, watered by prayer, guarded and protected by prayer, and the worker himself ever steeped in prayer, and hidden behind the supernatural working of an almighty hand.

V. THE PREEMINENT CHARM OF PAUL'S MINISTRY, AS ILLUSTRATED IN THESE LETTERS, IS THE SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS AND LOVE

"We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children." (1 Thes. 2: 7.) This is not a hired nurse, but a mother nurse, for the original emphasizes the fact that it is her own children. This is the right sort of nursing, and God forgive the mothers and help the children where they are left exclusively to the care of some hireling nurse. These were Paul's own children, and how tenderly he nursed them! Then a little later we have the figure of the father as well as the mother. "You know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children." (1 Thes. 2: 11.) And yet even more tender was the sacrifice of a love that gave himself to his spiritual children. "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us." (1 Thes. 2: 8.) The true worker must give himself to his work and put his life into it if it is to tell.

"How did you succeed in bringing up such a lovely family?" was asked of a mother whose children had become her crown and reward. "I gave myself to them," was her answer. "I shared in all their troubles and their joys, held my leisure at their command, counted no sacrifice too great, and poured out my life for them as well as in them, and I have, indeed, my great reward

today." We cannot win souls without love. A harsh theology will not bring them to Christ. Alfred Tennyson says that he had an old Calvinistic aunt that used to say every time she met him, "Alfred, whenever I see you I am led to think of that verse, `Depart you cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" It is a wonder that under such circumstances the poet ever had as much religion and love as he attained. The wise Spurgeon used to say to his students, "You are the salt of the earth, and, boys, the sugar, too." It is the sweetness that draws. What a blessed quality a genial, kindly spirit is in Christian work! How often a smile, a playful word, or a grain of love will prevent a painful crisis and heal an incipient strife! In one of the meetings of a New Jersey Presbytery at a little village called Cranberry, the brethren were almost coming to the boiling point of some local trouble which they were trying in vain to settle from the opposite sides of the question, when a good brother from Princeton, noted for his blandness as well as his wholesome humor, arose and said, "Mr. Moderator, I propose that we put a little sugar into this Cranberry tart." The effect was electric, and even the good doctors of divinity were unable to get up again, after their humiliating fall, to the plane of conflict.

But it is especially in the work of soul-winning that love tells. It is said that the first incident in the Christian work of the late Mrs. Catherine Booth occurred while she was but a child. A poor fellow was being dragged to prison by two policemen, and the jeering, hooting crowd were following him along the street, while his face was blazing with shame and anger. The little child was deeply touched, and pressing through the crowd to his side she gently put her hand upon his arm and told him that she was going to walk with him as far as they would let her. And so all the way to the jail the little one tramped beside the criminal, cheering him by her loving sympathy and standing by him in his trying hour. Little wonder that in later years she was able to draw the hearts of lost men and women to her with a power that has left its impress on one of the noblest religious movements of the Christian age.

VI. GLIMPSES OF THE GOSPEL PAUL PREACHED

We have some glimpses of the Gospel that Paul preached to the Thessalonians, for besides the spirit of the man we must ever emphasize the power of the Word. It is the man of God and the Word of God together that the Holy Ghost uses. Paul's Gospel was large and complete. It was a Gospel to attract men and save them to the uttermost. He was not a social reformer wasting his strength and time on a thousand little negative efforts to fence men round and keep them from evil by moral persuasion or material restraints, but he just trusted to the truth in all its largeness and fullness to lift them to a higher plane, and carry them with a controlling impulse.

The difference between man's moral system and God's great salvation is that man is always trying to dig up the rocks and remove the snags from the river, while God is aiming to pour a floodtide into the channel that will lift the little boat above the snags and rocks. They tell of an old weatherbeaten pilot who once pulled himself up to the desk of a ship owner in New Orleans and asked for a job to run one of the river steamers up the Mississippi. Of course, the ship owner immediately asked him if he knew the river. He said he did know something about it, but added, "That's not saying that I know much about the snags in the river." "Well," said the owner, "I don't see much sense in my employing you as a pilot if you don't understand where

the snags are." "Wall," said he, with an impressive look, "I reckon I know where the snags ain't, and that's where I expect to do my sailing." The ship owner did not need much shrewdness to see the qualities behind this weatherbeaten but keen old man, and he soon closed the contract. Far better to know where the snags ain't than where they are.

God's great salvation is intensely positive. It has one thing for us, and that one thing is all we need to know. For the rest the Holy Ghost will care from day to day. Paul's great Gospel gave to his disciples salvation, sanctification, deliverance for the body as well as for the soul and spirit, the blessed hope of the Lord's coming, and the Holy Spirit Himself to lead and teach. God has given us such a Gospel. Let it be our joy and pride to give it in all its fullness to a perishing world.

VII. FINALLY THE SPIRIT OF PAUL'S MINISTRY WAS THE HOLY GHOST

"Our gospel came unto you not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thes. 1: 5). All personal qualities, all ministerial training, and even the most full and glorious message will fail to reach men's hearts and lives without the direct power of the Holy Ghost. As the Master did not begin His ministry until after the baptism at Jordan, and the disciples also waited for Pentecost, so we must tarry before we go, and learn that it is not our eloquence or unction, but the direct working of a mightier Person through which all fruit must come. It is not only that we are conscious of the power, but if we are truly working in dependence on the Spirit we shall find that He is working along with us in the hearts of the hearers, and witnessing to our message with an authority and power altogether apart from our personal influence or conscious blessing. He will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. This is not our convicting but His. This is a power that we can only claim by faith, and as we believe in Him we will find it co-working with us, and our work will cease to be ours and become His, for "He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

May God make us such ministers and workers for Christ and our fellow men as God has taught us in the beautiful example which we have gathered from the letters of Paul to the disciples at Thessalonica.

Christ In The Bible

Thessalonians

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 4

GOD'S BEST

"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power." (2 Thes. 1: 11.)

There is a good, a better, and a best. It is a good thing to be saved; it is a better thing to be sanctified and consecrated unto the Lord; but there is a best and highest life into which we may enter, even all the good pleasure of His goodness and the highest possibilities of faith and love.

There is such a thing as graduating from college after passing the required subjects and receiving your diploma; but there is also an honor class, and a prize awaiting the successful competitors and the men who reach the highest proficiency.

St. Paul wanted to be the best. "All run," he says, in this great conflict, "but one receives the prize. . . . I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" -- not lost or cast away from the presence of God, but deprived of the incorruptible crown when the reward is given, and the eternal prize. And in another place he tells us, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." The day came when the prize was won, and even he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

This was the prize to which James and John aspired, and Jesus did not discourage them or tell them that it was unattainable. He told them it was dependent upon their willingness and ability to be baptized with His baptism and to drink of His cup. It was not His to give, except to those for whom it was prepared -- the heroes, the conquerors, the highest and the best.

This principle of hope is an element of human nature, and God appeals to it in the promises of His Word and the recompenses of His kingdom. God is not looking for great quantities today, but for high qualities.

We are in the closing days of the New Testament dispensation, and we may expect the same things that marked the last days of the old economy. Then God had to turn from communities to individuals for the accomplishment of His great purposes. The kingdom of Judah failed to

fulfill His expectation and stand as His witness against an evil world; and so He had to reject Israel and Judah and let them go into captivity, and even allow His own glorious temple to fall because His people would not be true to Him.

Then He picked out a little woman named Esther, and a young man called Daniel, and three Hebrews in Babylon; and through these weak instruments He compelled the proud Babylonians to acknowledge His power and bow to His glory, and He wrought in a single generation more for His great name than all the dynasties of Israel had accomplished in centuries.

So again the day is approaching when even His own Church may fail Him. The pure apostolic church of John and Polycarp became the apostasy of Rome, and we need not wonder if the church of the Reformation should have begun already to resemble the picture of Laodicea, "rich and increased with goods" and saying, "I have need of nothing," and about to be rejected with disgust because of its lukewarmness.

God forbid that we should utter aught against its true spirit, but every earnest and true Christian knows that, at best, we have today a small minority for fidelity to the truth, and no sort of approximation of Christian living up to the standard of His Word and the power of His Spirit. It is the old story of Gideon once more, not only the thirty thousand picked out of Israel, but the three hundred picked out of the thirty thousand.

God is looking today for pattern men; and when He gets a true sample, it is very easy to reproduce it in a thousand editions, and multiply it in other lives without limitation.

All the experiences of life come to us as tests; and as we meet them, our loving Father is watching, with intense and jealous love, to see us overcome; and if we fail, He is deeply disappointed, and our great adversary is filled with joy and triumph. We are a gazing stock continually for angels and principalities, and every step we take is critical and decisive for something in our eternal future.

When Abraham went forth that morning to Mount Moriah, it was an hour of solemn probation; and when he came back, he was one of God's tested men, with the stamp of His eternal approbation. God could say, "I know him, that he will . . . do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him."

God is looking for such men today. He is longing to say of us: "I know him. I can depend upon him. I have tried him, and he has not been found wanting."

What is the highest Christian life? What is the life that God is trying to reproduce in the lives of His saints? Is it the repair of wrecked humanity? Is it simply the restoration of Adamic purity? Is it only the bringing back of the human soul to the condition in which it was before the fall? This would be a poor result for such tremendous cost as the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what guarantee have we that, if this were accomplished tomorrow, the wreck would not be repeated the next day, and the race as lost as ever?

No, God has accomplished something very much higher; nothing less, in fact, than the new creation of a new race, patterned not after the human, but the divine. "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven." "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." "As is the earth, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

God is now aiming to reproduce in us the pattern which has already appeared in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Christian life is not an imitation of Christ, but a direct new creation in Christ; and the union with Christ is so complete that He imparts His own nature to us, and lives His own life in us. It is not an imitation, but simply an outgrowth of the nature implanted within.

We live Christlike lives because we have the Christ life. God is not satisfied with anything less than perfection. He required that from His Son. He requires it from us, and He does not, in the process of grace, reduce the standard, but He brings us up to it. He counts us righteous in justification, and then He makes us righteous in sanctification, and says of the new creation, "He that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death," for this very purpose "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He requires of us a perfect faith, and He tells us that if we believe and doubt not, we shall have whatsoever we ask. The faintest touch of unbelief will neutralize our trust.

But how shall we have such perfect faith? Is it possible for human nature? No, but it is possible to the divine nature; it is possible to the Christ within us. It is possible for God to give it, and God does give it. But Christ is the Author and Finisher of our faith, and He bids us "Have the faith of God"; and as we have it through the imparting of the Spirit of Christ, we believe even as He.

We pray in His name and in His very nature, and we "live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." The love that He requires of us is not mere human love, nor even the standard of love required in the Old Testament, but something far higher. The new commandment is "Love one another," not as yourselves, but "as I have loved you."

How shall such love be made possible? "Herein is our love made perfect, . . . because as he is, so are we in this world." Our love is simply His love wrought in us, and imparted to us through His own indwelling Spirit.

There is no place in life to which we ever come that is so delicate, so difficult, and so critical, as the place where God requires of us some exercise of love which is contrary to nature, and we find ourselves utterly inadequate to it. When we have to meet an enemy with divine forgiveness and with what seems a perfect adjustment of spirit, not ignoring, perhaps, their gross and inexcusable wrongs, but, at the same time seeing them as He sees them, loving them as He loves them, meeting them without resentment, but with a pure divine benevolence -- at such points as these we are thrown upon Christ, and without Him we should sink in despair.

It is here that the life of Christ reveals itself, and the heart is lifted up into a divine sweetness impossible to the natural man, and filled with praise and wonder at the riches of Christ's glorious grace.

This is also the secret of all true service and of all victorious suffering. Someone has expressed it in this striking way: "We can do more than we can." God is constantly calling us to situations where human nature is utterly unequal to the pressure, just that we may show the infinite resources of His grace. Therefore, it is not the patience of the suffering one, but the power of Christ which enables us to bear it, so that we shall be stronger for the very suffering. This was Paul's experience with the thorn in the flesh. The thorn was not removed, but there came to him through it such an influx and afflux of divine strength that he was really better off than if the thorn had not been there; and the spectacle of his victorious spirit brought infinite glory to the name of his divine Lord.

So again our service for Christ is not the best that we can do, for God most frequently uses the weakest instruments, and uses them at their weakest, that the glory may be given to him, and that it may be manifestly His working and not ours.

How shall we glorify God? By doing something for Him that will make Him our debtor, and show how loving, faithful, and capable we are? That would glorify us, not Him. God needs no addition to His happiness from our little store. He is richer by far than we, and all we call our own belongs to Him. The true way to glorify God is for God to show His glory through us, to shine through us as empty vessels reflecting His fullness of grace and power. The sun is glorified when it has a chance to show its light through the crystal window, or reflect it from the spotless mirror or the glassy sea.

There is nothing that glorifies God so much as for a weak and helpless man or woman to be able to triumph, through His strength, in places where the highest human qualities fail us, and carry in divine power, through every form of toil and suffering, a spirit naturally weak, irresolute, selfish, and sinful, transformed into sweetness, purity, and power, and standing victorious amid circumstances for which its natural qualities must utterly unfit it; a mind not naturally wise or strong, directed by divine wisdom, and carried along the line of a great and mighty plan -- this is what glorifies God.

He does not want to see us reflecting our own glory, but, like the heavenly blue and the celestial constellations reflected from the glassy bosom of the lake, He wants to see His own face and His own grace shining through our lives and saying to the world, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me."

So the highest possibilities of Christian life are put within the reach of the feeblest and the most helpless lives. It is all of God; and if it is all of God, it is possible for the weakest of men. And, therefore, in a sense, it is easier to live a high life than to drag along upon the lower plane.

It is easier to stand on a higher plane than below; it is easier to stand on the mountaintop than to stand with one foot on the heights of grace while with the other we are dragging our life

along the lower levels. It is easier for a car to run on a track than off, and it is easier to be always on the track than to be sometimes dragged along the pavement stones.

If we are but willing to trust God utterly, and belong to Him unreservedly, He is waiting for vessels "meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work."

The potter has the clay before him for a beautiful vase, to be embellished with every touch of loveliness, to stand in his palace for the highest and holiest use. But, alas, through no fault of the potter, but because the clay will not suffer His hand to mold it as He would, it is marred in the hands of the potter, and unfitted for His highest destination. One little scratch will cause a hopeless blemish. The highest things must be the most unspotted. The more costly the dress, the more it shows the ink spot. The whiter the muslin, the more easily it takes a stain. The more perfect the French glass, the more quickly does it show a flaw. It may be used for some other purpose, but it is unfitted for the highest place. It must be set aside, and its highest use be ever unfulfilled.

Oh, how very, very sad the disappointments that heaven will reveal; the might-have-beens that will pass before our vision and then vanish forever away; the crowns we might have worn; the high callings we might have won!

The potter may take up the clay again and make another vessel. So God takes up our broken lives and does the best He can with them.

O beloved, may God inspire us to choose His highest choice, and let nothing hinder all the good pleasure of His goodness, or keep us from what the Apostle John has said, "that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward."

Give me, Lord, Your highest choice;
Let others take the rest;
Their good things have no charm for me
For I have got Your best.