

Radiant Lives

Radiant Lives

Marian M. Hay

**Author of
“GOD’S OUT OF DOORS”**

“They looked unto Him, and were radiant.” Psalm 34: 5, Free translation.

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1. The Call of God

In all men there is a longing for God, though this is often unrecognized. All human ways to find God fail, for sin is an impassable gulf. Only Christ has bridged this gulf, and only through His plan of the gospel, righteousness by faith, may any man cross it.

DEEP in the heart of man is a craving for God that nothing on earth can satisfy. It was no mere poetic fancy of the psalmist that led him to exclaim: “As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” Psalm 42: 1, 2.

This craving is as deep and real as the other inborn hungers of the human frame—the hunger for food, the thirst for water, the desire for knowledge, the longing for love. And like these it was placed in man to be satisfied, and that in its satisfaction man might develop and grow to his full stature.

It is eternally true that unless man finds God he will be incomplete, something short of his full self. To be complete, man must have his four-fold nature developed in proportion. If his body is undeveloped or incomplete we say he is a weakling, a dwarf, or a cripple; if his mind has failed to grow, we call him an idiot, an imbecile, or a moron; if he shuns human society, we call him a hermit.

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But we seldom stop to think that if the spiritual nature is undeveloped a man is just as handicapped, just as deformed, as if he were a cripple or an imbecile. But he need not remain so.

The Cicada's Life

While digging in the earth near the roots of certain trees, we sometimes turn up strange, pale, slow-moving little creatures. They are a sickly white, with six legs, and great unseeing eyes. On their backs are tiny wing-cases. They are the nymphs of cicadas, and for a great part of their time they live in the earth, intent on finding their food and burrowing slowly through the soil. They are blind and inarticulate and incomplete. In some species this stage lasts for seventeen years.

But there comes a day when they are conscious of some mysterious call. They push upward to the light, emerge from the ground, and climb the nearest tree. Here a miracle happens. The skin down their back splits open, and a beautiful creature steps out of the old encumbering shell. The eyes shine like jewels. The wings, so long tightly folded, are spread to dry in the sunlight. The whole creature shines with an iridescent luster.

Bursting with joy at its emancipation, it sings with such exuberance that the noonday heat throbs and quivers with the sound.

In many ways man resembles the cicada. Until he responds to the call of God, he is earth-bound, blind, and concerned only with providing for his earthly comfort. He has eyes, but they see not beyond his narrow earthly cell. They are blind to the radiance and heavenly glory above him. He has wings, but they are tightly folded, and he knows not how to use them—he is barely conscious of their existence.

The cicada nymph lives in the earth only until it hears the call to go upward to the light. Its stage in the ground is terminated by a brief and wonderful day. To all the call comes, and all respond to it.

To men, too, comes the call to higher things, but relatively few respond to it. They live and die in the earth, incomplete, undeveloped, their glorious possibilities unrealized the life which might have been full and abundant cramped and blind. After years in the ground, the cicada enjoys its free, joyous life in the treetops and the sunlight for only a few brief weeks. But man, if he but heed the call, will emerge out of the darkness into the light, not for a limited time, but for ever.

And yet, though so few respond, the hunger for God is fundamental to human nature, common to every race and age. There are some who teach that heathen philosophies and religions are just different ways, of coming to God—the way is different, but the destination is the same. As though men saw the goal of their hopes as a tall mountain peak, and each went toward it, through jungles or desert, on any one of a number of converging paths.

The Chasm of Sin

But such reasoning is false, inasmuch as it is more than distance that separates man from God. Between earth and heaven is a deep, impassable chasm—the abyss of sin. Multitudes, restless, unsatisfied, aspiring to something beyond themselves, surge along the roads that their leaders tell them will lead to peace and satisfaction. But after all their striving, they find themselves on the brink of the chasm of sin, unable to cross it.

Under one or other of three great systems of thought the vast majority of men are ranged. Heathen philosophy teaches that the anger of the gods must appeased by costly sacrifices; that their deities can be approached only by elaborate ritual and through the offices of a special priesthood. Thus the mind is darkened by ignorance, and the soul is bound in fetters of fear. In the strongholds of darkness the power of the heathen priesthood is absolute. Call them witch doctors, devil priests, or spokesmen for the gods, they maintain their hold by professing to satisfy the universal longing to be in harmony with the spiritual world. But after impoverishing themselves to enrich the priests, after undergoing painful and terrifying experiences, the heathen are still haunted by the consciousness of sin, the agony of disappointment, the despair of hopelessness.

Another great religious system professes to deliver men from the burden of sin by a series of prayers and penances. A soul is committed to purifying fires for a longer or shorter period, depending upon the prayers said for him, and the payments made to the priesthood by his surviving loved ones. But again, all the splendid ritual and gorgeous trappings of this form of religion fail to rest the heart and relieve it of its burden of sin.

Those who heed the call of God will emerge out of darkness into light, not for a limited time, but for ever. And there is our modern civilization. It is largely material; its philosophers have taught that science supersedes faith, that evolution and the religion of progress have made God superfluous. And men,

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conscious of their inborn hunger and dissatisfaction, have tried to quiet it by heaping together riches, by a mad whirl of pleasure, by all manner of excitement and stimulation. As a result, men have become psychopathic. They have exhausted every known means of satisfaction, and they are sick with frustration and a sense of failure and poverty in the midst of their luxury.

Divine Strength

Few, so few, have found the one true way to God, and, having found it, rejoice in the life, the joy, the freedom, and the strength that a personal acquaintance and a vital connection with God confer.

In a country district where a few grapes were grown, I remember seeing a field that had once been a vineyard, sown with grass and used for grazing stock. The vines had been rooted out, all but one, and it had been left in a corner to itself, forgotten and neglected. There it stood in spring and early summer, a riot of growth, sending tall, swaying shoots into the air. They reached upwards, tendrils clutching at the empty air; and, finding no support, nothing to which to cling, fell back and twined about the tangle of growth from previous years. It was a pitiful sight, a fruitless, useless vine, serving only as a hiding place for vermin. Just through the fence were rows of trained vines, each pruned, each tied to a strong support, each in its season bearing heavy clusters of fruit.

Even so is the life of the man who knows not God contrasted with the life of him who submits to the discipline of God, and clings to a support stronger than himself. Unless a man lays hold of divine strength, all his aspirations, all his strivings for a higher life, will be in vain. He will fall back upon himself, disappointed and disillusioned.

We have spoken of the frustration that ends all efforts to find God and satisfaction by human effort and wisdom. Between man and God yawns the gulf of sin, and man can build no bridge over it. If the story of human sin and human striving ended here, it would indeed be black with despair. But God has provided a bridge, and one only. That bridge is Jesus Christ.

The story of this bridge is the most wonderful in the world. It is the story of the seeking love of God, of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus, and of the boundless power of God thus made available to mankind. It tells of how the righteous life of Jesus may be claimed and lived in our weak and faulty lives by the exercise of God given faith, until lives sunk in sin and despair may be transformed into the very likeness of Christ. It tells how sin can be overcome, how the heart may find rest and peace.

The Everlasting Gospel

This is the story that we would tell again, not because it is something new, but because it is God's one unchanging solution to the age-old problem of sin. It is the religion of the apostles, the acceptance of which changed the world. It has been the religion of every true revival since. It is the grand old story of salvation, the everlasting gospel of God's power to save to the uttermost those who come to Him.

It is because there is salvation in no other way, and because few even among professing Christians either understand its meaning or experience its power, that we present this brief outline of the great truth of righteousness by faith, how it has become available to man, how it may be appropriated, and the revolutionary change it will make in the life. It is because the power of the gospel is forgotten or unknown that men are in despair and misery today.

Although open to all, men have become so blinded by unbelief and the selfish pursuit of material things that there are few indeed who know even the theory of this wonderful plan, or who believe that it is just as powerful today as when the apostles proclaimed it. There are fewer still who have entered into the experience of freedom and joy and abounding life that it opens to them.

The truth of righteousness by faith is the nucleus of the gospel, the sum and substance of God's saving work for man. It is the place where God with His fullness meets man in his emptiness and destitution.

Here men receive the riches of His grace, the fullness of God, and go forward transformed, empowered to overcome the enemy and to come forth victorious.

As we study this glorious subject humbly and prayerfully, God will open to us marvelous things, and life will take on a new meaning.

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2. A Plan That Works

The gospel is a life rather than a theory. It transformed the disciples after Pentecost, and they in turn transformed the world. The Reformation and the Methodist Revival were but instances of when men grasped anew the forgotten truth. The gospel is revealed in the lives of all who in faith claim its power.

GOD'S gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus is more than a theory to study-it is a life to live; it is more than a doctrine to learn-it is a transforming experience. Because this is so, we shall for a little time remind ourselves of what it has done in the lives of men and women who through the ages have accepted it into their hearts. The beauty of a winsome Christian is the first thing that attracts. There is an inner radiance, an out flowing joy.

The world into which the gospel burst was a terrible place. Men were disillusioned, hopeless, apathetic. They were spiritually and morally bankrupt. Greek philosophy, which had promised so much, could not satisfy the soul. The mystic religions from the East had likewise failed. The Jews, claiming to be the people of the one true God, and to have special revelations of truth, chilled by their coldness, repulsed by their self-righteousness, and disgusted by their hypocrisy those who sought from them the way of life.

The old religions had lost their hold, for they had nothing more to offer. Life was meaningless and empty, with no certainty to which drifting humanity could anchor. In the words of Matthew Arnold:

“On that hard pagan world disgust And secret loathing fell.
Deep weariness and sated lust Made human life a hell.”

Transformed Men

Into this world of death and corruption and despair came the apostles of Jesus, surcharged with the life and power of Pentecost. They had surrendered their selfish desires for position and authority, and to them their risen Lord fulfilled His promise:-

“You shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and you shall be witnesses unto Me-both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:8.

They were changed men. Delivered from the enslaving bondage of sin, they were utterly fearless in the face of threatening and personal danger. They were filled with, a new life, the indwelling life of God, and from their very presence there radiated a joy and hope that drew men irresistibly.

There was power in the preaching of those Spirit-filled men; but the influence that drew thousands into the early church was as much in the radiant lives of the apostles. There was about them a shining purity, a resistless strength, and a peace and joy which neither injustice nor hatred, prison nor scourging, nor even death itself could change or destroy.

Nothing like it had been seen before. The life and power and fellowship with God of which the apostles spoke was manifestly a living experience to them, and seeking men, unsatisfied hitherto, knew immediately that this was that which would satisfy their inarticulate longings.

The dewy freshness and the spontaneous life of the early church are beautifully pictured by John A. Hutton, editor of the British Weekly:

“It is like coming in out of the night to read that second chapter of the Book of Acts. It is like warming ourselves at the fire and then sitting down to a table lit up with friendly faces. In fact, that is exactly what the church of the New Testament is like: it is like a home. A humble home, it may be; but above everything a home. The presence of life, the presence of Young life even, the stir, the unconventionality, the intimateness-all are incidents of a home as a home should be. The church of the New Testament is like a home, all astir with the entertainment of a beloved Guest.

“The last look of the old disciples which we have in the Gospels is of broken and disappointed men, some sullen, some angry almost to the point of blasphemy, all of them at a loss and miserable. Whereas here we meet the same men alert and happy, full of praises, and with a passion for the name of Christ. Something must have happened in the interval, we say. And if we want to know what it was that happened, we must simply believe what they themselves tell us, that they have seen Christ, no longer dead, but alive, and having the glory of God. . . . The same power from God which made such a difference in:

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their case is, ready to help us, also.”

When the joyous Christian fellowship of that first church in Jerusalem was broken up persecution, the church strengthened rather than weakened, for “they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.” scattered firebrands spread the fire.

A Changed World

The impact of the gospel on the despairing pagan world was tremendous. Churches were raised up in the strongholds of paganism, and even in the court of the notorious Nero there were faithful Christians, for writing from Rome to the Philippians Paul sent greetings from all the saints, and “chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.”

In the amazingly short space of the apostles’ own lifetime, the gospel spread to the known world—from the British Isles to India. The apostles themselves were truly great missionaries, and as they labored unceasingly in the power of the Spirit, multitudes were won from paganism and hopelessness.

But this cannot account for all that was accomplished. The gospel preached had in itself the power of self-propagation, and each believer, in his own sphere, became a missionary, a witness. The irresistible influence of a transformed life, the wholesome contagion of a life set free from the bondage of sin, bubbling over with joy and shining with peace, won countless neighbors and friends whom the transient labors of the apostles themselves could not reach.

Thus all over the pagan world, in cities and towns and villages, were gathered out companies of men and women whose spirits were alive after death, and for whom life had taken on a scope that compassed eternity. They had renounced the corruption of the old life, and found their joy in serving one another, and in spreading to others the joy that filled their own lives.

Thus it has ever been in any true revival. There is life and joy and freedom. The love that fills the heart is diffusive, and spreads of itself by a twofold action—the one in whose heart this love abides longs to impart it, and seeks out others to share his joy; but equally if not more effective is the power of his unconscious influence. Like Moses returning to the camp of Israel after his forty days of communion with God in the mount, who “knew not that . . . his face shone,” the true Christian will be surrounded with a heavenly atmosphere of peace and light. An inner radiance will shine out from the eyes and the expression, though the one thus blessed is all unaware of the attraction.

In the great revival of the Reformation, when the spirit of man was set free after centuries of bondage, there was an uprising of joy and freedom and happy fellowship. The preaching of the Reformers met a great need, and satisfied a deep hunger of the human soul. The gospel truth of righteousness by faith in Christ alone, and of free salvation, called forth joy and singing wherever it was grasped and appropriated.

The Methodist Revival

The Methodist revival under the preaching of John Wesley and the ministry of the Holy Spirit brought to England the impetus of a new life. At that time religion was formal, cold, and dead; the common people were sunk in superstition and vice, and the rich were corrupt and profligate.

To such an atmosphere came Wesley after his conversion, on fire with a message of salvation, burning to proclaim to the world that by grace men and women and children may rid themselves of the shackles of sin, and step at once into the illimitable freedom and the glorious light of sonship with God. So began his mighty mission; thus he raised a torch in England, and far beyond, the light from which reached into the gloomiest corners of a land crushed by the new Industrial Revolution.”

“The flame he had kindled did not die out. It grew and spread. It burned up much that was unclean. It glowed in men’s hearts, its warmth like the love of God, its light a lamp to guide erring souls towards perfection. Wherever Wesley had gone there had been a resurrection of life from the dead, of good from evil, of singing from sorrow, of joy from wretchedness, of noble purpose from apathetic aimlessness. He had brought a spiritual revival such as Great Britain had never known or felt before, and the work he had begun continued after his death.” – “Easter at Epworth,” by H. L. Gee, pages 34-37.

Our Need Today

It has been said so many times as to be commonplace, that the need of our time is for a spiritual revival. Nevertheless we repeat that what the world at large needs, what individual men and women need, is a new in filling of the power of God. Nothing but this can fill the heart with joy and peace. Nothing but

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this can bring a sense of harmony and meaning into the life; nothing but this can make a man equal to the overwhelming difficulties that he knows he is facing today, and to the unknown emergencies that rise up without warning.

This alone can enable a man to live in harmony with his ideals of conduct and thought. To all men there come times of revelation, when the beauty and the desirability of the higher life become manifest. With this revelation, and the striving to reach it, comes a realization of the power of sin and the weakness of the flesh, a consciousness that it is impossible to reach the shining that heights of vision. Too often such a one will sink down in despair, hating himself for his weakness, but powerless to live above it.

The glorious truth of salvation by faith offers the only solution. By bringing divine life and power into human lives, it enables a man to live above sin, to be an overcomer in the battle against evil.

This does not mean that once a man accepts Christ, and by faith appropriates the provisions of the gospel, that there will be no more difficulties or trials. On the contrary, trials will probably increase in number and intensity. But they have not their old power to cast him down and discourage him. There is within an upwelling spring of strength and confidence that nothing can hinder or stay.

“In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16: 33.

“You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he is in the world.” 1 John 4: 4.

This consciousness of power imparts a poise, a buoyancy, a quiet peace in the face of trials and annoyances.

The Christian Life

The beauty of a winsome Christian is perhaps the first thing that attracts. There is an inner radiance, an out flowing joy, a welling up of abounding life. The impression is given that here is one who is equal to any occasion that might arise; one who has hidden reserves of power and joy of which the ordinary man knows nothing.

It is a refreshment just to meet such a Christian. Even a passing contact, as during a journey, will warm the heart and let in a breath of heaven.

But it is in times of trouble that the influence of a true Christian is most felt. In times of sickness or loss a Christian neighbor or friend will be a tower of strength and an unfailing spring of inspiration. With the tact and grace that spring from a loving heart, she will minister and encourage. And when bereavement comes, and all human comfort is unavailing, the true Christian will bring to aching hearts the balm of divine solace, the strength of God's own consolation.

When trouble comes to the Christian himself, he demonstrates the excellence and the power of his inner life. He not only endures trial and sorrow and loss - he rejoices during the time of sorrow. To see a Christian smile through tears when the heart is stricken is to get a glimpse of the eternal world, and so see what Christ can do in the human heart.

“How lovely are the faces
Of the men who talk with God
Lit with an inner sureness
Of the path their feet have trod.

“How gentle is the manner
Of a man who walks with Him.
No strength can overcome him,
And no cloud his courage dim.

“Keen are the hands and feet-ah, yes-
Of those who wait His will,
And clear as crystal mirrors
Are the hearts His love can fill.”

Such a life is open to all. When He calls us, God has in mind nothing short of this fullness of joy and peace and life. We limit His purposes for us by our lack of faith, by holding on to the past life, by refusing to take Him at His word. What God has done for one, He will do for another. No life is too steeped

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in sin, too stained with evil, for Him to uplift and transform.

Volumes could be written of the marvelous transformations that are witnessed in mission lands, when heathen men and women, debased and degraded by superstition and fear, have taken hold of the gospel, and have been changed into new creatures. Set free from sin, they find their greatest joy in leading others into the new life they have found so wonderful.

The Life of George Muller

As an example of what God can do in a human life, let us consider the experience of George Muller. We think of him as a giant in faith and prayer, and remember the marvelous work that he carried out in the Bristol Orphanages. But not so many know of his early life. His father was indulgent, and gave the boy large sums of money. Early in life he began to steal money, and at a classical school he spent much time novel reading and engaging in sinful practices. Even while his mother lay dying, he was playing cards till two o'clock in the morning, and next day roamed the streets half intoxicated. He served a jail sentence, but only plunged more deeply into sin and dissipation. With other reckless companions he toured Switzerland, securing money and passports by forging letters from his father, and leaving many debts unpaid.

Such was Muller's character during the first twenty years of his life. It seemed that he was well on the way to a career of crime, when an event happened which miraculously influenced his spirit and turned him into another man. One Saturday night at the university, learning that his friend Beta was going to a cottage meeting for prayer at the home of a tradesman named Wagner, George Muller asked if he might go along. Upon entering, however, Muller apologized to the master of the house for coming uninvited, and was put at ease by the kindly reply, "Come as often as you please; house and heart are open to you."

The small company sang a hymn, and then one of the number knelt down and asked the blessing of God upon the meeting. Mr. Muller had often attended religious services at church, and the university was a Lutheran institution, yet up to this time he had never seen anyone on his knees in prayer, nor had he ever so prayed himself. After the prayer a chapter from the Bible was read, and a printed sermon, and then after another hymn and prayer, the service closed. It was a simple, quiet gathering, yet revolutionary in the heart of George Muller.

From that prayer meeting the gay and godless young man went forth a Christian, saying, "All my former pleasures are as nothing in comparison to this evening." It was the scene of humble prayer that seemed to affect him. The Spirit of God must have made in that hour a deep impression upon his wayward heart, for prayer was ever after to be the helm sheet anchor of his life. By it he gained the victory over all the old habits of thought and life that had degraded him; by it he demonstrated to the world the power of God.

The work for which he is best known is the establishment of homes for orphans. He never asked any man for money to build or to maintain them; but he kept the needs of the homes ever before the Lord, and miraculously every need was met.

The gospel is more than a theory or a philosophy. It is a plan that works, an overcoming life that may be lived.

The House of Christmas

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

For men are homesick in their homes,
And strangers under the sun,
And they lay their heads in a foreign land
Whenever the day is done.
Here we have battle and blazing eyes,

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And chance and honor and high surprise;
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun.

A Child in a foul stable
Where the beasts feed and foam;
Only where He was homeless
Are you and I at home;
We have hands that fashion and heads that know,
But our hearts we lost-how long ago!
In a place no chart nor ship can show
Under the blue sky's dome.

This world is wild as an old wife's tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our war:
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings,
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome;
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be-and that are
To the place where God was homeless,
And all men are at home.

G. K. Chesterton

3. The Gospel of Salvation

The gospel finds its spring before the creation of the world. It is a superhuman power, by which man may, through Christ, become a partaker of the divine nature, thus coming closer to God than if he had never fallen. Unless he grasps this superhuman power, man will fall far below his possibilities.

WHEN a sinner steps out of darkness into light; when the burden of guilt that has weighed him down for years rolls away, and he knows that he is forgiven and free. When old desires and habits lose their power to enslave in the presence of a greater power; when joy and peace fill the heart in place of unrest and despair-then indeed a miracle has been wrought, and the wonder of it fills the consciousness. It is apparent to all that a great change has been made; and this in itself is the test argument for the truth of the gospel and its power to men.

Let us take a little time to trace to its source this wonderful stream of salvation that brings the waters of life within our reach today. In the minds of many, the gospel story began on the plains of Bethlehem that night of long ago when angels gave the message to the wondering shepherds:

“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” And then the angel choir sang the song of joy and praise: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.” Luke 2: 10-14.

The birth of the Son of God into the human family was the opening of a new phase in the plan of

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salvation. But, we must go further back than Bethlehem to find its source.

Abraham, the friend of God lived almost two thousand years before the birth of Jesus. What was the basis of his relationship with God? He was acquainted with the plans and provisions of the gospel, for we read: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Galatians 3: 8.

It was the gospel of righteousness by faith in a Savior to come that saved Abraham, for "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." Romans 4:3. Abel, too, found salvation the same way: "By faith Abel ... obtained witness that he was righteous." Hebrews 11:4.

Before that, at the very entrance of sin, we find God speaking a message of hope and a promise of deliverance, even before He pronounced the inevitable sentence of death. Addressing the serpent, God said: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15.

Then followed the pronouncement of the curse, and the sentence of death: and the fallen pair were expelled from Eden:

"They hand in hand with wandering steps and slow
Through Eden took their solitary way."

We are at the fountainhead of the human race here, close to the entrance Of sin; but the stream of the gospel flows full and strong. Where may we seek its source?

Before the World Began

To find it we must seek in the depths of the wisdom and the love of God. Before the creation of the world that plan was laid. Strangely, mysteriously, rebellion had come into the universe. Lucifer, highest of the angels, sought for himself honor and glory that were due to God alone. With consummate cunning he sowed the seeds of revolt in the minds of his fellow angels, until he and those who followed him were cast out of heaven.

All of God's reasoning creatures are endowed with freedom of will-they may give to God free and joyful obedience, or they may choose to rebel against Him. Before the creation of the world, God knew that the energies of the enemy would be exerted against the human family. He knew that, endowed with freedom of choice, it would be possible for them to sin, and bring death upon themselves. Right there He made provision to meet the emergency.

By divine revelation God had made known His purpose and motives in creating the world and the human race. Sweeping back the veil of mystery that hides the period before the creation of the world, He tells His reason for doing it, and the safeguards He provided for man's eternal safety.

His first purpose for the human race was eternal life, for we are "in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Titus 1:2.

Foreseeing the entrance of sin, He made provision for man to regain life, even if it were forfeited by sin. Before the creation of the world, or the existence of man, Jesus was foreordained to be its Savior. "You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold.... 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." 1 Peter 1: 18-20.

The destiny of the human family was linked with Christ before the world was made. Writing to believers Paul said that God "has chosen us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." Ephesians 1: 4, 5.

The place that Jesus Christ held in God's plan for the human family before the creation of the world, is further revealed by Paul in his First Epistle to Timothy: God "has saved us, and called us with an holy calling. . . . according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." Verse 9. Thus it could be said that Christ was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13: 8.

Partakers of the Divine Nature

We cannot yet understand the vast sweep of divine wisdom and love revealed in these sublime revelations; but they suggest how God is able by His supreme and infinite wisdom to overrule all the evil designs of the enemy.

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God's purpose for man was eternal life, unending happiness, unbroken fellowship with Himself. The enemy came in, man chose to obey him, and fell into sin, thus bringing death, suffering, and separation from God. It seemed that God's plans must fail utterly.

But no. The plan of salvation, "the mystery which has been kept in silence through times eternal" (Romans 16:25, RV), immediately came into action, and by faith in its provisions man could here find peace and fellowship with God, and look forward to a full restoration of all that was lost-all and more.

For God's plan involved the giving of His Son to the human race, a gift never to be taken back. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16 The Son of God became the Son of man for all time. Divinity came to abide in humanity. Christ was born into the human family that we might be born again, and thus enter the family of God.

"As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it became Him to be made like unto His brethren." Hebrews 2: 14-17.

"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that has called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:2-4.

Thus, man is brought closer to God than if he had never fallen. He becomes a partaker of the divine nature, and enjoys an intimacy of fellowship with the divine that is possible to no other created beings. No wonder that Paul exclaimed with reverence and awe as he studied the wonderful plan of God: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33.

Man, created with free will, was not created until the way was made for his return if he chose to sin. The plan of salvation was complete and ready to go into instant operation. If man fell, there would never be an instant when he would not have a Savior. He was made "just and right, Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall." And when he fell God was ready with His saving plan.

Power to Save

Paul defines the gospel as "the power of God unto salvation," or God's power as manifested in reclaiming men and women from sin, and reinstating them as children of God.

The mysterious power of electricity manifests itself in many ways. Though it defies definition, and hides its true identity from student and scientist, yet it will do man's work for him and serve in a thousand ways if he will observe the laws by which it operates. Harnessed to trains and trams, it will manifest itself in motion. Again, it will drive the machines of a thousand factories, light the lamps in cities and homes, and provide the heat in stoves and radiators. It is the one power harnessed to meet a-hundred different needs. But each different type of service requires a special medium, a channel for its manifestation.

The power of God has been manifested in many ways. There was His creative power, when by a word He formed the worlds, and called into being the myriad forms of life and beauty with which they are peopled. There is that form of divine power constantly exerted which holds the vast universe in cohesion and unity. The human mind cannot begin to grasp the immensity of the power that is expended, moment by moment, for unceasing ages. Suns with their satellites, whole systems and galaxies, each unit with its own motion, yet each as a part of its system, it keeps in perfect time and balance as all swing in stately cycles without rest or weariness.

We call it the power of gravitation which holds these heavenly bodies to their course; but this is only our name for that mysterious and inexplicable power, a "pull" working over empty space, sufficiently strong to hold each body to its orbit, instead of its flying off on a straight line. "By Him all things consist," or hold together. Colossians 1: 18. This power is none other than the power of God constantly exerted.

Isaiah, awed by a revelation of this power, called men out to behold the splendid pageantry of night. He turned men's thoughts to the power behind the stately precision and the singing silence of the spheres:

"Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who has created these things, that brings out their host by number: He calls them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one fails." Isaiah 40:26. Notice the terms the prophet uses to describe the divine power that upholds the universe. It is "the greatness of His might," because He is strong in power."

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Come back now to the gospel, “the power of God unto salvation,” that special manifestation of His power by which God is able to lift man up from sin and death, and restore him to life and holiness. This power is described as “the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 1: 19-21.

The gospel is a superhuman, supernatural power, outside of and beyond man, a miracle working power that is able to reach down to the lowest depths of human depravity, and lift man to the very throne of God. A transforming power that can change a sinner into a saint, a drunken profligate to a noble and upright man. Wherever the gospel is preached in its fullness, such changes are manifest, and they constitute the greatest and most unanswerable argument for its truthfulness.

It is the fashion today to repudiate anything that cannot be demonstrated in terms of scientific reasoning. The miracles of the Bible are either explained away by natural causes, or are regarded as myths; creation is superseded by evolution. Christ’s divinity is denied, and He is said to be merely the best man who ever lived, an excellent example, but no more. In keeping with the evolutionary philosophy, it is taught that by developing the good inherent in himself man can save his own soul, and by his own efforts bring the kingdom of God to earth.

Man Needs the Supernatural

But man needs the supernatural if he is to grow up to his full stature. He will be dwarfed and cramped if his mind and spirit are for ever confined to the narrow limits of human understanding. This inborn need is beautifully expressed in the poem, “Shall Search,” by an unknown author:

“When all the wise and the prudent have said what they have to say,
And out of the law and the prophets have taken the thunders away,
And out of the Book of Beginnings have taken the wonders away,
I shall search for a new religion, with a pillar of fire by night,
And a Red Sea cleft through the middle, and an ark, and a white dove’s flight.

“I shall find me a garden of Eden, with a serpent scorning the sod,
And a girl wide-eyed with wonder, and a man in the image of God;
And the flaming sword of an angel, and the flaming work of God.
I shall look for a new religion that can overthrow proud Baal,
With manna white as the hoarfrost, and a Jonah saved by a whale.

“When the grand old tale of creation is told in the form of germs,
And the evening and the morning look forth on a trail of worm,
And the burning words of the prophets are reduced to their lowest terms,
I shall need a new religion, all fire and mystery,
Too big for a brain like mine to hold, or the eyes of the wise to see.

“When the mists of doubt shall settle round the steps of the Nazarene,
When the little lost lamb shall cry in vain, and the pitiful Magdalene,
And out of the old, old story shall vanish John three sixteen,
I shall look for another Savior; and to whom shall I go-to whom?
Who can show me another Calvary, and another empty tomb?

“But what if from babes and sucklings is rendered the final word
To the wise of earth, and the subtle, who reason away my Lord?
What if the blood of the martyrs cries out to a risen Lord?
Ah, then I will search the Scriptures! On my knees I will search, and see
How the glorious light of the ages is the light of life for me.”

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4. The Love of God

The power of the gospel is the power of love. There are three revelations of God—light, life, and love. The law of love is the law of spiritual gravity that binds into unity and harmony all intelligent beings. Divine love is infinitely resourceful. By its magnetic power it draws all.

WE speak of the power, of the gospel, and marvel at the resources of divine might that make it available to mankind. But let us ever remember that here is no mere display of power as such, however overwhelming that power may be. It is power motivated and impelled by love. It is the love of God in action. A sense of power leaves us overawed and fearful; a realization of Jove warms and awakens our heart, calling us to respond.

Three sublime revelations of the nature of God come to us in the pages of Holy Writ.

God Is Light

“God is light.” He dwells the light that no man can approach unto. He is the exhaustless source from which the suns and galaxies of heaven draw their light. Think for a moment of the light shed forth unceasingly from our own sun, one of the smaller bodies in the universe. A model of our solar system will give an idea of the relative size, and the distance apart, of the sun and its planets. In this model a globe a foot in diameter will stand for the sun. A small round shot thirty-six yards distant will represent the earth, and a marble two-thirds of a mile away will be Neptune.

Radiating evenly, silently, ceaselessly from the sun, its light goes forth, powerful enough to leap over what we term empty space. When we consider the relative sizes and distances of the sun and its planets, we realize how infinitesimal a fraction of the light and heat constantly radiating reaches the surfaces of these tiny and distant bodies. It is silent, gentle, almost imperceptible in its coming, yet it is able to open the buds of countless millions of flowers, to awake the sleeping life principle in each planted grain, causing it to spring up into blade, ear, and full corn in the ear, until the harvests for a world’s food are brought to golden perfection, and mankind is fed. It is the sun that provides the power for the vast irrigation system of nature, noiselessly drawing up to the skies on a languid summer day the immeasurable volumes of water that fall again in rain and snow, and that flow back to the sea in the rivers of the world.

Plants and animals alike, if deprived of the light and heat that originate with the sun, quickly sicken and die. But each person, animal, and flower that has access to the sunlight is able to enjoy the full temperature and light at that given place. SO abundant is the light and heat, that the fact that millions of others are receiving all they can bear does not lessen the supply for any. To our understanding an overwhelmingly large proportion of light and heat goes to waste, dissipated unused throughout space.

Thus, the picture we get of the sun is not of a great body hoarding its beams, and then sending them forth with careful economy to some place of darkness and need. Rather it is of a body of radiant light, whose very nature it is to send forth its life-giving light.. And unless some dimming veil is placed between, all within range of its light will receive it in unstinted supply, simply because it is the nature of the sun to shine.

Similarly, God is light, and it is His light that lights the unnumbered suns of the universe. From Him, too, flows forth all the intellectual and spiritual light that has ever blessed the understanding and enlightened the intellect of reasoning beings.

“The world has had its great teachers, men of giant intellect and extensive research, men whose utterances have stimulated thought, and opened to view vast fields of knowledge, and these men have been honored as guides and benefactors of their race; but there is One who stands higher than they. We can trace the line of the world’s teachers as far back as human records extend; but the Light was before them. As the moon and the stars of our solar system shine by the reflected light of the sun, so, as far as their teaching is true, do the world’s great thinkers reflect the rays of the Sun of Righteousness. Every gleam of thought, every flash of intellect, is from the Light of the world.” – “Education,” pages 13, 14.

God Is Life

Again, God is the fountain of life. At creation He endowed every creature with life from Himself, and ever since that same life has been constantly given to sustain life in all its manifestations. No living thing, either plant or insect, animal or man, has life inherent in itself. Each draws from the exhaustless fountain the vital energy that enables it to complete its life cycle and to perform its functions. Of every

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created being it is true that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being.” Acts 17: 28.

In His parable of the seed, Christ stated the truth that God is the source of all life. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knows not how. For the earth brings forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” Mark 4: 26-28.

Commenting on this parable, Ellen G. White says: “There is life in the seed, there is power in the soil; but unless an infinite power is exercised day and night, the seed will yield no returns. The showers of rain must be sent to give moisture to the thirsty fields, the sun must impart heat, electricity must be conveyed to the buried seed. The life which the Creator has implanted, He alone can call forth. Every seed grows, every plant develops, by the power of God.” – “Christ’s Object Lessons,” page 63.

“There is life in the seed, there is power in the soil; but unless an infinite power is exercised My and night, the seed will yield no returns.”

God Is Love

“God is love.” This great truth underlies all truth, all revelations Of God’s nature and character. Love is more than an attribute of God’s character; it is His character.

Between the Father and the Son is perfect reciprocal love. Each can enter fully into the thoughts and purposes of the other. Together They planned and created the universe; together They laid the plan of salvation; together They suffered when man fell, and when the plan was brought to a triumphant conclusion by the life and death of Jesus; and together They await the day of the final extermination of sin. Their love is the perfect love of equals.

But even such love could not satisfy the Father and the Son. In its very nature divine love is utterly unselfish and diffusive. Reasoning and intelligent beings were created that they might have the love of God bestowed upon them, and that they might rejoice for ever in life and development and love. As the law of gravity, exerting its invisible power on every object in the universe, welds its vast complexities into indissoluble unity, so the law Of love, acting in the spiritual realm, was to unite every intelligent being by the living but intangible bonds of love and understanding, to every other being and to God Himself.

Thus streams of light and life and love, uninterrupted by any opposition or impediment, flowed from God to every portion of His vast dominion, until sin entered and brought ruin and disharmony. With its entrance, the light was dimmed and life was cut off at its source. Everlasting death and destruction would have been inevitable had not the love of God, unchanged and undiminished, flowed out to His fallen children. Upon our darkened world the Sun Of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings. He alone is able to heal the breach, to restore harmony.

The Resourcefulness of Love

Love is infinitely resourceful. Our literature is greatly enriched by the stories of human love and devotion enshrined in it. Against seemingly insuperable obstacles love has pitted itself, and has triumphed.

“Over the mountains and over the waves,
Under the fountains and under the graves;
Under floods that are deepest which Neptune obey;
Over rocks that are steepest love will find out the way.”

What can we say of the resourcefulness of divine love? The gospel is the love of God in action—the love of God setting itself to solve the seemingly insoluble problem of sin; to maintain truth and righteousness and justice, and at the same time to save man from everlasting ruin. It seemed impossible that love and justice could ever reach an agreement that would fully satisfy both, but so wonderful is the plan of salvation that God’s justice is eternally vindicated and His love is demonstrated in a way that fills the souls of men and angels with adoration and awe.

Because this plan went into action immediately man sinned, the human family were not at once to suffer the sentence of death and be cut off from the life of God. A period of time was given, with opportunity of accepting the salvation offered by God, and of developing a character, through divine power, that would fit a man for immortality. There was provision for him to separate himself from sin if he chose to do so.

The love of God offers the strongest inducements to fallen and rebellious man to return to his Father’s house. The welcome given to the returning prodigal in the parable but faintly pictures the seeking,

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forgiving love of God, ready to wipe away the tears of penitence and clothe the sinner in the beautiful robes of righteousness.

The whole Bible is a revelation of the love of God. The keynote of the Old Testament is: "The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." And the New Testament is a fuller revelation of this love. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3: 16. "The Father Himself loves you," said Christ. And again the drawing, unifying power of the love God as manifested in the gospel is revealed: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." John 12: 32.

Oh, how much the world needs a manifestation of the love of God! If Christians would demonstrate in their own lives the radiant love of an indwelling Christ, they would need fewer arguments and less disputation to convince unbelievers of the power and reality of their religion. A vision of the love of Jesus will win the heart and subdue evil as nothing else can.

In the closing chapter of his matchless appeal to backsliding Israel Hosea showed what could be their experience if they would turn to God once more: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard Him, and observed Him." Hosea 14: 8. Inspired by this text, a present-day poet has written these lines:

"Has thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?
Is not yours a captured heart?
Chief among ten thousand own Him,
Joyful choose the better part.

"Idols once they won thee, charmed thee,
Lovely things of time and sense;
Gilded thus does sin disarm thee,
Honeyed lest thou turn thee thence.

"What has stripped the seeming beauty
From the idols of the earth?
Not a sense of right or duty,
But a sight of peerless worth.

"It is that look that melted Peter,
It is that face that Stephen saw,
It is the heart that wept with Mary
Can alone from idols draw:

"Draw and win and fill completely
Till the cup overflow the brim;
What have we to do with idols
Who have accompanied with Him?"

The Magnetism of Love

It is the uplifted Christ who will draw all unto Him through the resistless gravity of love. He is drawing to Himself now those who will respond; and He has ever in sight the glorious consummation of His plan, when, the terrible interlude of sin for ever past, one pulse of harmony and unity will beat throughout the vast creation.

Christ will be the great center of gravity, and to Him all will look for light and life and joy. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him." Ephesians 1:10.

God loves us, not because there is in us anything to attract or deserve His love, but because it is His nature to love. He loves us, not because we are worthy of it, but to make us worthy. Therefore in full confidence we may cast ourselves on the mercy of God, knowing that He will receive us. These two Passages describe the love of God, beyond our deserving, beyond our understanding, yet within our reach,

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and all-sufficient to lift us up from the Pit of sin and set our feet upon the solid rock.

“When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled we shall be saved by His life.” Romans 5:6-10.

“He that loves not knows not God, for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we Might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” John 4: 8-10.

5. Stronger Than Death

The cross is the supreme expression of divine love, divine wisdom, and divine power. By His death Christ defeated the enemy. Because of the cross God can be at once just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus.

THE cross is the expression of a love that is stronger than death; it is the unmasking of an envy that is as cruel as the grave. It is the center around which all the warring elements of evil raged with satanic fury; it is the haven from which have come all the joy and peace that have ever blessed humanity in the past, or that ever will bless it in the future.

Around it the powers of light and the powers of darkness met in a combat that decided the destiny of the world. There love conquered hatred, life conquered death, good conquered evil-for there Christ conquered Satan.

In the ages before the cross, all of good and beauty and hope in the world, all that was true and noble in the lives of men, were there because of the promised coming of Christ to suffer and die. Since His death, all that has been made real and all that has been made possible in Christian life are there because of the cross.

Itself a fathomless mystery, even the mystery of redeeming love, the cross is the key that will unlock all other mysteries. It is the light that reveals the hidden purposes of God, and His power and wisdom; that makes clear the mysteries of human life, with its depths of evil and its heights of nobility; that illuminates the past, the present, and the future. Thus the cross holds a position of supreme importance, and should be the theme of constant study and meditation.

And yet to the great majority the cross is regarded as unimportant and having no relation to life. To the natural pride and self-sufficiency of the human heart, the thought that it must look to a power beyond itself for salvation is repugnant. Therefore, many of those who are counted the world's wisest men have sought to devise some system for the salvation of mankind that is entirely independent of God. The preaching of the cross they, regard as foolishness. But no amount of human wisdom can bring life and hope to the soul dead in trespasses and sins. Only Christ, the Crucified One, can do this.

The attitude of the reputedly great men toward the cross is similar today to what it was in Paul's day. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

The world as we know it is a battlefield of conflicting forces. In the spring the floodtide of life will surge over the land in exulting growth and beauty. But the forces of death are constantly at work, and blight and drought spoil the fair promise of spring. The living creatures prey upon each other, and in countless

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ways are victims of misery and pain. So it is with humanity. Even the longest lifetime is too short to realize a fraction of the ambitions and possibilities that are bound up in it, and the dark angel of death frequently cuts off lives that are just beginning to show their powers. Injustice and oppression often grind down individuals and nations, until it seems that there is no power to put things right. In the spring the flood-tide of life will surge over the land. But the forces of death are constantly at work.

Into the world thus lashed with the cross-currents of evil, Christ came “to reconcile all things unto Himself.” What infinite depths there are in that word reconcile! It means the bringing of peace out of war, friendship out of hatred, harmony out of discord, order out of chaos.

After Satan had destroyed the harmony of the universe, and brought death and destruction to the earth, we see Christ step down to the seething conflict and bring the peace of heaven once more to earth. But at what a cost! Only by His death could He destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death had been subject to cruel bondage. Hebrews 2: 14, 15.

It was by the death of Christ on the cross that harmony and unity were brought back to the natural world, and life and peace to the human heart.

“And making peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death.” Colossians 1:20-22, margin.

The Paradox of the Cross

It is a strange paradox that the very time when victory for Satan seemed certain, the moment when Jesus died upon the cross, was the instant when the doom of Satan was sealed, and the plan of salvation was for ever made certain and secure.

By His death Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death. Francis Thompson expresses the wonder of Christ’s victory through His apparent defeat in these Powerful words:

“O Captain of the wars, whence won You so great scars?
In what fight did You smite, and what manner was the foe?
Was it on a day of rout they compassed Thee about,
Or gloat You these adorning when He wrought their overthrow?”

“It was on a day of rout they girded Me about,
They wounded all My brow, and they smote Me through the side;
My hand held no sword when I met their armed horde,
And the conqueror fell down,
And the Conquered bruised his pride.

“What is this, unheard before, that the Unarmed make war,
And the Slain has the gain, and the victor bath the rout?
What wars, then, are these, and what the enemies,
Strange Chief, with the scars of
Thy conquest trenched about.”

The cross is God’s answer to the problem that the devil believed to be incapable of solution. It demonstrates how, in God’s nature, love and justice, mercy and truth, blend together, and do not neutralize, but strengthen each other. The fulfillment of the statement made by God through the gospel prophet is in the cross uplifted on Calvary’s hill: “There is no God else beside Me. A just God and a Savior; there is none beside Me. Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Isaiah 45:21,22.

Saving love in no way sets aside the justice of God. Because of the death of the Son of God in acknowledgment of its claims, the law of God, the foundation of His throne, was established beyond question. Thus God is both “just, and the justifier of him which believes in Jesus.” Romans 3:26.

The broken law of God and the ruined life of man called out for help. In perfect harmony with both His justice and His love, and exalting both to heights before undreamed of by any inhabitant of the limitless universe, God answered with the sacrifice of the cross. As Professor Findlay says: “The cross of Jesus was to draw humanity around it, by its infinite love and sorrow, by the perfect apprehension there was in it of the world’s guilt and need, and the perfect submission to the sentence of God’s law against

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man's sin."

Strength and Wisdom

Christ crucified is declared to be "the power of God and the wisdom of God." The question considered above, how God could at once be just, and the justifier of those who believe, centers largely around the thought of the wisdom of God. But the cross is also the power of God.

How seldom these two gifts are united in one individual! Often there will be blind strength, undirected and going to waste on unworthy pursuits. Again, there will be a brilliant mind, able to think and plan, but without the physical strength to carry out the plans. Where both wisdom and strength are united, there is seen one who is a leader and commander of the people.

In God, wisdom and strength are united. "With Him is wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding. "With Him is strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver are His." Job 12: 13, 16.

Answering the question, "Who is this that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength?" there comes the assuring message, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Isaiah 63:1. He is indeed "mighty to save," No one who flees to Him for safety will find that His strength is not sufficient to beat back the pursuing enemy. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." John 10: 27, 28.

What gave Christ His power to defeat the enemy and protect His people was His suffering and death. It is in the wounded hands of the Good Shepherd that His sheep are safe, beyond the power of man or devil. "And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Your hands? Then shall He answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends. Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man that is MY fellow, said the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd." Zechariah 13: 6, 7.

It was the Man who was the equal of God who suffered and died. He was one with God, yet wholly man, and here was His power as a Savior. I have laid help upon One that is mighty; I have exalted One chosen out of the people." Psalm 89: 19.

Because Jesus is mighty to save, He will make real in the surrendered life His own life of perfect obedience to the will of God. No more will sin have dominion in the life that was once at enmity with the principles of right. No more will eternal death loom up as the inescapable end of all life.

When the Son of God is seen upon the cross, suffering and dying to restore harmony to the universe, and everlasting life and peace to ruined humanity, the soul goes out to Him in gratitude and love. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us, but now we love Him because He first loved us. In the light of the cross, the law of God shines with new luster. If it is so holy as to demand the death of its Author to satisfy its claims, then it should be honored in the renewed life, and its righteousness fulfilled by the power of Him who lives within.

"What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:3,4.

"O safe and happy shelter,
O refuge tried and sweet,
O trysting-place where heaven's love
And heaven's justice meet!
As to the homeless Patriarch
That wondrous dream was given,
So seems my Savior's cross to me
A ladder up to heaven.

"There lies beneath its shadow,
But on the farther side,
The darkness of an awful grave
That gapes both deep and wide;
And there between us stands the cross,
Two arms outstretched to save,
Like a watchman set to guard the way

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From that eternal grave.”

When the believer beholds the measureless love of God as revealed by the cross, he responds, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Galatians 6:14.

CONVERSION

You ask me how I gave my heart to Christ?
I do not know
There came a yearning for Him in my soul
So long ago.
I found earth's flowers would only fade and die
I wept for something that could satisfy;
And then-and then-somehow I seemed to dare
To lift my broken heart to Him in prayer.
I do not know-I cannot tell you how;
I only know He is my Savior now.

You ask me when I gave my heart to Christ?
I cannot tell.
The day or just the hour,
I do not now Remember well.
It must have been when I was all alone
The light of His forgiving Spirit shone
Into my heart so clouded o'er with sin.
I think it was when I trembling let Him in.
I do not know - I cannot tell you when I only know
He is so dear since then.

You ask me why I gave my heart to Christ?
I can reply. It is a wondrous story.
Listen while I tell you why. My heart was drawn, at length, to seek His face.
I was alone I had no resting-place. I heard how
He had loved me with a love of depth so great, of height so far above
All human ken; I longed such love to share,
And sought it then, upon my knees in prayer.

You ask me why I thought this loving Christ
Would heed my prayer?
I knew He died upon the cross for me
I nailed Him there.
I heard His dying cry “Father, forgive!”
I saw Him drink death's cup that I might live;
My head was bowed upon my breast in shame!
He called me-and in penitence I came.
He heard my prayer! I cannot tell you how,
Nor when nor where. Only I love Him now.

F. G. Brown

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6. The Miracle of Conversion

The new birth, or conversion, is imperative, for alone man is utterly helpless; a new life from beyond himself must enter his life. When a person is born into the family of God the law of heredity still operates. now in his favor, for he has now a divine inheritance as well as his sinful human inheritance.

THERE is nothing that can equal the joy and bliss that fill the soul when, perhaps after a long struggle with self and sin, a full surrender is made to Christ. The intolerable burden of guilt rolls away, and the heart is radiant with the light and love of Jesus. All things have become new in the heart, and because it is everlastingly true that what we are determines what we see, it seems that the whole earth is clothed with new beauty and shining with heavenly light.

“Heaven above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green;
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen.
Birds with sweeter songs overflow,
Flowers with heavenly beauty shine,
Since I know, as now I know,
I am His, and He is mine.”

There are a number of terms used to describe the miraculous change that takes place in a human being when he surrenders his life to God. He realizes that while he is lost and helpless, God is able and willing to meet all his needs.

Conversion is a turning from sin and worldly interests to holiness and heaven; a change in the manner of thought, and of the entire life. This outer change is the evidence of the reality of the inner experience. This inner change is sometimes called a change of heart, and this term lays emphasis on the new de, sires and determinations that rule the life.

The new birth is perhaps the best term of all, for it conveys the thought of a new life, the life of God, entering a human life. Before this the higher nature is dead, and the lower nature is in control. But as the soul yields to the voice of the Holy Spirit, a new life is implanted; the spiritual nature of man is restored to life and supremacy. Regeneration is simply another word for being born again.

Justification by faith is the change in a man's standing with God that takes place on conversion. He acknowledges that he has nothing to recommend him to God, and by faith accepts God's forgiveness, believing that God forgives all the sins of the past, and accounts him righteous.

Man Is Helpless

To the natural heart of man the thought is distasteful that that this he is unable of himself to compass his uplift. Through the centuries he has formulated philosophies and devised plans which seemed to put his need of divine aid right in the background. The medieval church taught that heaven could be earned and the price of sin paid by a system of fasts, penances, pilgrimages, and prayers.

Modern religious teachers declare that man has in himself a spark of divinity which needs only to be fanned into flame by education, by right environment, by freedom from want. Improve the environment, and you improve the man, they say. Bring education and enlightenment to the masses, and they will work out their own salvation.

But the old doctrine of total depravity, of original sin, or of man's total inability of himself to effect his own salvation, is not to be disposed of in this way. All that man can do or teach of himself fails to bring peace to the heart, fails to bring him into living contact with God. The miracle of lives transformed by the, gospel is Powerfully witnessed to by native Christians in mission lands.

There are those who believe doctrine of the universality of sin in human nature is gloomy and melancholy. It would be indeed did it not also hold out the hope of complete recovery. Alexander MaClaren says on this point:

“We believe in a fall, and we believe in a possible and actual restoration. The man to whom evil is not an intrusive usurper can have no confidence that it will ever be expelled. Which is the gloomy system—that which paints in undisguised blackness the facts of life, and over against their blackest darkness the

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radiant light of a great hope shining bright and glorious. Or one that paints humanity in a uniform monotone of indistinguishable gray involving the past, the present, and the future-which, believing in no disease, hopes for no cure?"

For man is in bondage to sin, and nothing that he can do can free him of it. He has in himself the germs of death and corruption, and is powerless to counteract or escape them.

A Supernatural Change

Therefore it is imperative, if he is to find life and peace, that some power outside of and beyond himself come into operation, implant the principle of life, counteract death, and give power to overcome sin and to live righteously.

"The Christian life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin and a new life altogether." – "Desire of Ages," page 172.

This transformation of nature it is beyond the power of man to accomplish. It is in the realm of the supernatural; it is a miracle which can never be brought about by natural means, but which God can do in the heart. It is the implanting of the divine life and nature in a human life, so that the human being may have power to conquer sin and to obey God.

Think back for a moment of the steps that made this possible. The divine Son of God became incarnate, was born into the human family. In our human form He lived on earth, and while exercising for Himself no power that we cannot claim, He lived a life of perfect obedience to God. Then He yielded that life in death, a perfect sacrifice. As the Son of God and the Son of man He became man's redeemer, in His humanity reaching down to man's deepest need; in His divinity laying hold on the throne of God.

Then following His resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit came to earth as Christ's representative. Heaven and Earth exchanged ambassadors, as it were. The man Christ Jesus represents man at the throne of God. The Spirit of God represents God among men.

The new birth takes place when the soul yields to the long wooing of the Spirit of God, and, admitting its own lost and hopeless condition, accepts the salvation offered by Christ.

Born of the Spirit

Perhaps it would be fitting here to mention one point that has often troubled Christians. They admit that Christ lived a sinless life, but feel that they cannot hope to do so. They say that Christ was God as well as man, and so He was able to do what they cannot do.

But think again. When Christ was on earth He exercised no power for His own benefit that we may not claim by faith. He became weary and longed for rest. He thirsted as He sat by the well-side, and waited until one came to draw. His power over sin was His because of His sonship with God. That power may be ours.

When the angel was announcing to Mary the great fact that she was to be the mother of the Son of God, she asked how this could be, and the angel answered: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Luke 1: 35.

Jesus had no earthly father. The angel spoke to Joseph in a dream, and told him that the child who was to be born of Mary was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 1:20.

Now let us get the application of this to the new birth. God knows that man in his natural state is powerless to obey His law and do His will. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Romans 8:7,8.

When man is born again it is through the operation of the Holy Spirit. The divine nature, with its sinlessness and its power, enters his human nature. It was this supernatural experience that Jesus explained with such care to Nicodemus:

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, You must be born again." John 3: 3-7.

Therefore every man who is born anew is born of the Spirit, and has implanted in him the divine nature, with its power to conquer sin. It is gloriously possible for him to live above sin, and to become perfect, through the indwelling power of God.

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The Law of Heredity

One other aspect of this great subject will perhaps make clearer to us Christ's work for us. This is the law of heredity, the inheritance of everything that comes to us from our parents. Adam was created perfect, with the possibility of building up a strong and sinless character by continual obedience to God. Had he done this, he would have passed on to his children a nature without taint or sin or bent toward evil. But the first children of the human race were conceived after sin had debased the nature of our parents, and, true to the law of heredity, "Adam . . . begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." Ever since, this fatal weakness has been inherited, as all know to their sorrow.

As head of the human race Adam failed. A new head was needed. Christ was born into the human family, as we have seen, compassed with every weakness in man's inheritance. He had laid aside all the power and authority that were His by right, and His life on earth was a life of total dependence upon God. As man, born of the Spirit, He met the tempter and was victorious where Adam had failed. He wrought out a life of perfect obedience and perfect righteousness. This life He transmits to us by the new birth, and again the law of heredity operates: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, You must be born again." John 3:7, 8.

What will be true in the resurrection of our bodies to glory may be true new, as Paul explains in speaking of Christ as the new head of the race, "the last Adam."

"The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, 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." 1 Corinthians 15: 45-49.

What a wonderful thing is this! We have inherited the sinful nature of fallen humanity, and have often mourned over our weaknesses and our inability to do what we know is right. True. But equally true is the fact that we may by birth, the new birth, inherit a totally different nature—a nature bent to righteousness, a nature victorious over sin, a nature delivered from death, and vitalized by eternal life, even the life of God.

In this miraculous way God deals with our fallen nature, so that no matter how deeply we may be sunk in sin, or how inextricably entangled in its snares, we may claim and experience complete deliverance. The old life may be continually mastered and subdued by the divine life to which we have yielded the position of authority.

To its tiny denizens, the pond is the beginning and end of the universe. They are ignorant of the world of air and sunlight and color.

7. Justified by Faith

Faith defined. The little pond on the meadow's edge and the great world above and around it. The world above is real though unseen. Martyrs, missionaries, and great spiritual leaders lived in reference to it. In the plan of salvation God's grace, Christ's sacrifice, and our faith each have a part.

FAITH has many aspects and many definitions. Perhaps it will suit our present purpose to call it that God given faculty of mind and spirit by which man becomes aware of and grasps unseen and eternal realities, and by which he appropriates to himself all that God has made possible by His gospel of salvation.

Faith is reaching upward and grasping the reality of God and of the eternal world. There are many who look upon faith as something unreal and shadowy, something imaginary, as contrasted with the solid reality of this world. But the spiritual world above us to which faith transports us, is real and tangible, though unseen.

The Pond in a Meadow

We may illustrate this by thinking of a pond at the edge of some sunny meadow. It is teeming with life and activity. Many of its inhabitants live out their little lives, unconscious of any world beyond the pond. To them there is nothing above the surface of the water. The pond is to them the beginning and the end of the universe. They are completely ignorant of the world of air and sunlight and vivid color, of forests, rivers, mountains, and cities.

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But among the life of the pond there may be some little creatures that appear no different in character or destiny from the rest. Like other forms of pond life they prey upon their neighbors, or feed upon decaying matter. After a time, however, these become aware of a call from above, which impels them to climb the stems of grasses or sedges, leaving the pond behind for ever. A wonderful change comes over them. From the repulsive shell emerges a brilliant dragon-fly, creature of sunlight and air, beautiful and swift.

If it could reason, what would it think of the difference between the narrow, slimy pond that was the world to it, and the vast spaces of light and beauty that it finds above, when it has been changed to fit its new environment?

There is an analogy here. Our life on this world, on the physical and mental side of our being, is like life in a narrow little pond, bounded by what we can see and understand. Above, though unperceived by our senses, is the world of spiritual reality vast, real, glorious. But in his natural state man cannot see it or live in it. There must be a transformation of nature, a new birth. Then, like the transformed dragon-fly, he is able to live in and appreciate a vast new world. He is able by faith, to see and appreciate heavenly things.

Read with this thought in mind these wonderful words of Scripture: "The Father . . . has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who has delivered us out of the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Colossians 1: 12, 13.

The world above the pond, though unguessed by the creeping things that live in its stagnant waters and move in the slime of decaying matter, though immeasurably vaster and more beautiful, though filled with things beyond the ken of the little pond creatures, is still a real world.

The Reality of the Unseen

Even so the heavenly world, though unseen by the eye of sense and though beyond our natural experience, and infinitely more glorious than anything we can imagine, is a real place.

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10.

The faith that brought an awareness of the unseen world was manifested to a marked degree in Noah and Moses. "Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house." Hebrews 11:7.

Noah's faith in the unseen led him to stand out against the evidence of his sense against the scientific giants of his time, against the unceasing ridicule of the godless multitudes.

The invisible world of light and glory was so real to Moses that the glories of the greatest earthly throne, glories that were within his grasp, appeared cheap and tarnished to him, and he forsook them without a backward glance.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:24-27.

Such was the faith of the martyrs, of the great spiritual leaders, of the missionaries who have forsaken riches and comfort on earth, that they might bring the glories of the eternal world to those sunk in darkness.

Appropriating Faith

But faith does much more than make us aware of the eternal world above us. We are saved by faith. Luke 7:50. We are justified by faith. Romans 5:1. We are to live by faith. Romans 1:17.

But, we ask, how can a faculty, even a God-given faculty, save us? Before we read three texts, remember that more intimate, more personal, and, indeed, essential if faith in the unseen is to reach its full grandeur, is that faith which appropriates all that God has made possible by His great work of salvation.

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

"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Romans 5:8,9.

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“The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Romans 3:21-24.

These three texts are not contradictory; they are complementary to each other. They suggest that faith is laying hold of God’s provision for our salvation. There are some who would make faith their Savior, who would place all the emphasis there. They say that if only their faith is great enough they can do all things. But we must not put our emphasis on faith, important as that is, but upon the illimitable resources of God’s saving grace that come to us through it.

At the foot of a mountain region stretches a rich and fertile area, studded with cities and towns, with well-tilled farmlands between. Then some men of vision, aware of the hampering lack of light and power, explore the mountains and find a lake, fed by swift, cascading streams and by melting snows. They realize the vast potential energy that lies in the placid lake, and at great expense they lay huge pipes which tap the water of the lake and convey it to a spot far below, where a powerhouse is built and turbines and generators installed. Then a vast network of power lines is set up, until every house and factory in the cities and every farm in the district, is connected with the power-house.

There comes a day when everything is ready. The water is turned on, and as it rushes through the turbines, the power-house is filled with the vibrant hum of power. A great switch is closed, and then, in home and factory and farm, it is needful only to turn a switch to receive instant light and power.

Many do not think beyond the turning of the switch. Light and power are theirs by a flick of the finger. They give no thought to the tranquil mountain lake, nor to the planning and labor that brought its power within their reach. Hundreds of men worked for months and years laying the pipes, building the powerhouse, making the machinery, laying the lines, installing the electric fittings in each home and factory. Now light and power are to be had for the turning of a switch.

Our faith is like the turning of the switch, to bring instant light. It is a simple thing, the work of a moment. But it is effectual because it connects the soul with the infinite power of God, and appropriates all that was made available by God’s infinite work of salvation.

The lake is a vast reservoir of power. But before this power can reach the plain, it must be tapped by pipes, transformed to energy in the powerhouse, and then made available to all.

We might liken the mountain lake to the reservoir of God’s infinite love and grace. To make this saving grace available to fallen and sinful man, Jesus Christ became man, lived and died, and rose again, by this means transforming the grace of God to saving power, and making it available to everyone.

Yes, we are justified by faith the instant we turn to God in our need. But behind that is the work of Jesus, at the measureless cost of His humiliation and His death on Calvary. And beyond that again is the unfathomable love and grace of God.

God’s grace, Christ’s sacrifice, our faith—these are the three links in the chain of salvation. In our study thus far we have come down to the point where God’s saving love comes into contact with man in his crying need. That point is faith. What takes place there is that man is delivered from the sentence of death, forgiven all his past sins, and endowed with the gift of Christ’s righteousness. This righteousness is a gift. Man did not earn it, did not deserve it, and had nothing to do with the making of it. For this gift of righteousness is the character of Jesus Christ as worked out for us while He was here on earth as the new head of the human race. He imputes it to us as we are born again. It is ours immediately we accept it. This experience is called justification by faith.

This imputed righteousness is pictured in the parable of the prodigal son as the “best robe” with which the father covered the rags and dirt of his penitent son.

In the sight of God man is counted righteous immediately he turns to Him in faith and claims the divine promises. Such was the experience of the thief on the cross, who received salvation in his dying hours. His standing before God is just as if he had never before sinned; his past was all forgiven, and the perfect life of Jesus was credited to him.

What confidence, what unspeakable peace comes to the soul to know that the past is all covered by the blood of Jesus, and His perfect life stands to our credit! “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:1.

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8. The Nature Transformed

Righteousness by faith is more than a covering of past sin; it is a deliverance from present sin through a constant, conscious choice of the right and refusal of the wrong. This involves a fierce and unceasing conflict with the powers of evil. The triumphs of faith are sometimes invisible to the natural sight.

RIGHTEOUSNESS by faith is more than a covering for past sin, and deliverance from the death that it merited. It involves deliverance from the power of sin as well as from its guilt; and victory for the present as well as forgiveness for the past; the formation of a righteous character through constant willing co-operation with Christ, as well as the covering of a guilty past. It is not the work of a moment, or of a day or a year, but of a lifetime. This phase of righteousness by faith is called sanctification.

Sanctification means making holy. One almost hesitates, even in a work of this nature, to use the word, for it is associated in many minds with fanatical claims and hypocritical pretensions. But our word holy comes from a good old Anglo-Saxon root, from which are derived the words “wholeness” and “health.” There is nothing queer or fanatical about them—they simply suggest perfect development and symmetry of the whole being. Holiness means a state of wholeness and health of the entire personality. It is the answer to Paul’s prayer: “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.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

As a simple illustration of the difference between these two phases of righteousness by faith, justification and sanctification, let us picture the case of a poor derelict, sick, destitute enslaved by drink or drugs, and hopelessly in debt. He is befriended by a rich and large-souled man, who seeks to help him. First he pays all the man’s debts, so that no creditor has a claim upon him. This may represent justification, when God pays the debt of our past sin, and forgives us. The rich man has wealth enough to go on paying the poor man’s bills, to give him a fresh start each time he falls back into his old habits, and to maintain him wholly in his weakness and need. But as has been well said, “It is a greater thing to make a man strong than to carry his load.” The rich man knows that there is a greater need than payment of debts incurred by sin and self indulgence. He enlists the man’s will on the side of overcoming, nurses him back to health, stands by him in his struggle against his old life, gets him a job where he may earn a good wage, and finally has him restored to self respect and happiness, able to pay his own way, and to hold up his head as a free, strong man. This represents what God does for us through sanctification, when moment by moment and day by day His indwelling presence overcomes sin, fortifies the weakened nature, and by enlisting and empowering the human will, works such miraculous transformations of nature that the sinner chained by his evil habits becomes a victorious and powerful Christian.

“The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Savior brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ, revealed in the life, testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Savior.” – “Christ’s Object Lessons,” pages 419, 420.

What Has and Has Not Been Done

Before we study in some detail just what is accomplished by sanctification, and how this change is brought about, it would be well to remind ourselves of what has been done, and of what has not been done, by the new birth, or conversion, by which means we are justified by faith.

In his natural state man’s spiritual nature is dead, and his fleshly or carnal nature is in the ascendancy. He is powerless to resist the demands of his fallen nature, though their indulgence makes him lose self-respect and gives him no lasting satisfaction. Conversion, the new birth, is the reception of a new life, a resurrection of the spiritual faculties. Paul describes it graphically in his letter to the Ephesians: “And you has He quickened [made alive], who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The spiritual nature is brought to life and placed in the ascendancy, and the whole being is turned about in another direction; whereas before the direction was toward inevitable and inescapable death, now it is turned toward eternal life.

But let us never forget that the new birth does not destroy the carnal nature, or place one beyond the possibility of falling. Nor does it destroy one’s long - established habits of thought and life. Conversion introduces the element of divine life into the human life, implanting new desires, new impulses, new

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motives. But the old life is still there, very much alive, and struggling for control.

If he is to win in the end, the Christian must now take up the fight, knowing that no easy victory will be his, but that he has entered upon a life-and-death struggle. He is not to sit back at ease and let the old life take control, feeling that he cannot win. Neither is he to become discouraged at the hardness of the fight, and give up. He can take courage with the thought that the very battle is a vital part of his salvation. At his conversion God worked for him what he could not do for himself. Now God will work in him to effect a transformation of nature, the building of a perfect character.

It is at this point that the work of sanctification begins. The divine life, introduced at the new birth, grows in our inward life, and continually and progressively dominates and subdues the old life of sin. But it can do this only in accordance with our will. Moment by moment we choose which power shall control our lives, for though the enemy can tempt us and entice us into sin, he cannot force us; and Jesus pleads with us and offers us inducements, but He will not compel us to do His will. We are free to choose—we must choose.

Thus everything hinges upon a right use of the will. Every conscious moment we are confronted by a choice that must be made. A duty presents itself; we choose either to do it at once or to neglect it. A temptation to some selfish indulgence would allure us. We either succumb or are victorious, according as we range our wills on the side of right or wrong. Perhaps in the unseen and secret region of our minds some train of thought, habitually followed in the past, starts almost unconsciously. If right will win here, there must be an immediate controlling of these thoughts, and a substitution of right and constructive thinking.

The will is the deciding factor. It may refuse the evil and choose the good, and having done this, may claim the power of the divine life to carry out its decisions. Human power alone is unequal to the warfare against sin, and defeat is inevitable unless some power beyond human strength is invoked.

The Unseen Conflict

Notice now several passages of Scripture that picture the conflict that is waged in the human heart: “The flesh wars against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other.” This is one rendering of Galatians 5: 17. While the flesh constantly fights against the higher nature, the Spirit within also fights back.

And read again of the mighty resources that are placed at our disposal in this battle, not against flesh and blood, but against the unseen forces of evil:

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” Ephesians 6: 10-18.

This warfare is carried even to the recesses of the -mind, where frequently the powers of evil, unseen and unsuspected by friends and associates, make their last stand, and all too often, from this unconquered citadel, recapture the entire being. But victory may be assured even here:

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10: 3-5.

And of the deceiving spirits and false prophets we are told: “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” 1 John 4: 4.

The Change Wrought

As the warfare against self and sin is carried forward relentlessly, a change is wrought in the entire being. The disposition is changed, the tongue is trained to speak only truth and kindness, the thoughts are brought into captivity to the will of Christ. This is accomplished by setting the will on the side of Christ, and then acting upon His promises. Where He has promised to give victory, victory is claimed. Thus the character becomes righteous in very truth, changed by taking God at His word, and by faith accepting all

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that He has promised and done. This is righteousness imparted by faith in Christ, sanctification, or the making holy of the one who believes in Christ.

It is called by Paul the renewing of the Holy Ghost," when the indwelling Spirit, by His *Miraculous power continually exercised in the life that is constantly yielded to His control, works an entire transformation of nature. In the text this work follows the new birth, "the washing of regeneration." by which the guilty past is washed away. Read of the whole wonderful process in Titus 3:5:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Some find it hard to reconcile the many statements that salvation is a free gift with the words of Paul in another passage: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." They fear that it is asking of them an impossibility, in view of their weakness. But one has only to read the very next verse to understand the meaning of the great apostle in these words: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Philippians 2: 12, 13.

God asks us to work out, or to manifest to the world by our actions, only what He has already worked in us by His transforming, indwelling power. He works within what we cannot do, to change the heart, renew its affections, and subdue its sins; then we are to work out by Christ like actions and upright lives the new principle that now rules within. We are asked only to give the outward evidence of an inward work.

"It is a greater thing to make a man strong than to carry his load." Our effort, uniting with the saving work of Christ, strengthens, develops, and makes perfect a character that shall stand the test of fire, and endure throughout eternity. We need the constant discipline of self-denial, of trial and hardship, of hard-fought battles, if self and sin are to be completely subdued, and the life is to reflect the image of our Savior fully.

The Triumphs of Faith

"When He shall appear, we shall be like Him." 1 John 3: 2.

Before we leave this subject of the process of transforming human nature, there is one aspect that should be mentioned. We speak of the triumphs of faith, and are amazed at the success, the answered prayer, and the mighty works that servants of God have experienced and done, they gladly confess, simply through faith in God. And because we have seen such evidence of the power of faith, we easily slip into the habit of judging our faith, or that of our friends, by visible results of it.

But faith is invisible, and its greatest triumphs are not always apparent to the natural sight. How many have noticed in reading the wonderful faith chapter that an abrupt change occurs in the manifestations of faith as given in the concluding passage? Read it again:

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae, of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; . . . and others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented. (Of whom the world was not worthy:) They wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11:32-40.

This passage shows that a man's faith may be honored by miracles of divine interposition, when the violence of fire will be quenched, armies of aliens turned to flight, and even the dead raised to life. Or another may demonstrate his faith by suffering wrong and persecution, loss and destitution, and perhaps at the end a violent death, with no visible reward in this life.

But the faith that sees no material evidence of its reality is surely not less than the faith that is rewarded in this life. The faith that endures loss and neglect and injustice is the faith of the martyrs, which was so potent a force in extending the early church. Mrs. Cowman tells the story of three Christians at prayer, to whom the Master drew near as they knelt:

"As He approached the first of the three, He bent over her in tenderness and grace, with smiles full of radiant love, and spoke to her in accents of purest, sweetest music. Leaving her He came to the next, but

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only placed His hand upon her bowed head, and gave her one look of loving approval.

“The third woman He passed almost abruptly without stopping for a word or glance. The woman in her dream said to herself, ‘How greatly He must love the first one; to the second He gave His approval, but none of the special demonstrations of love He gave the first. And the third must have grieved Him deeply, for He gave her no word at all and not even a passing look. I wonder what she has done, and why He made so much difference between them!’”

“As she tried to account for the action of her Lord, He Himself stood by her and said: O woman, how wrongly has thou interpreted Me! The first kneeling woman needs all the weight of My tenderness and care to keep her feet in My narrow way. She needs My love, thought, and help every moment of the day. Without it she would fail and fall. The second has stronger faith and deeper love, and I can trust her to trust Me however things may go and whatever people do.

“The third, whom I seemed not to notice, and even to neglect, has faith and love of the finest quality, and her I am training by quick and drastic processes for the highest and holiest service. She knows Me so intimately, and trusts Me so utterly, that she is independent of words or looks or any outward intimation of My approval. She is not dismayed nor discouraged by any circumstances through which I arrange that she shall pass; she trusts Me when sense and reason and every finer instinct of the natural heart would rebel-because she knows that I am working in her for eternity, and that what I do, though she knows not the explanation now, she will understand hereafter.

“I am silent in My love because I love beyond the power of words to express, or of human hearts to understand, and also for your sakes that you may learn to love and trust Me in Spirit-taught, spontaneous response to My love without the spur of anything outward to call it forth.”

Again, the strongest terms are used to describe the strength that God will give to us, not only to meet the great issues of life, but to be calm and unruffled amid the petty trials and rebuffs and annoyances of daily life. And all of us are conscious of our need for supernatural strength to live victoriously amid the common duties of life.

One of Paul’s beautiful prayers for his converts is that they might be “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long - suffering with joyfulness.” Colossians 1:11.

From these introductory words, “strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power,” we expect to hear of some trial of the calibre of the fiery furnace or the den of lions. But no; all of this divine power is made available to us in order that we might exercise “all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.”

There is not a set of circumstances in which we may be placed over which we may not be victorious. We may be more than conquerors amid the greatest trials or the most petty annoyances. And wherever we may have been called to live, we may be assured that our heavenly Father has made abundant provision that our character -building may be carried forward successfully. We may live for Him just where we are, and there be preparing for the future immortal life.

9. Peace in Believing

Though a life of conflict against evil, the Christian life is at the same time a life of peace and rest. Soul peace comes when the whole life is grounded and settled in the love of God. To keep in this relationship there must be time for meditation and prayer. The significance of the Sabbath to peace of soul as well as rest of body. “The rushing stream may turn the wheels of industry, but it can never catch the reflection of the sky.”

THROUGHOUT its troubled history the world has been shattered and laid waste by war. Seldom has it enjoyed the blessing of peace for an extended period. Human life, wealth, and historic treasures have been repeatedly wiped out in orgies of destruction.

Equally destructive of individual happiness and attainment is the unrest that has tormented the hearts of men. For since sin entered the world, peace has been a stranger to them. Only the gospel with its keynote of “Peace on earth, goodwill toward men,” can restore it; only those who accept the provisions of the gospel can experience it.

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True, the Christian life is a life of conflict and battle. We have stressed the fact that there must be constant and unsleeping vigilance if the uprisings of the natural heart are to be held in check, and the new life in Christ is to hold sway over the entire being.

But the Christian life is also a life of peace, for “the peace of God, which passes all understanding,” keeps the hearts and minds of those who have committed the keeping of their lives to God. It may seem that a contradiction is here, but the conflict is between the lower and the higher nature; the battle that must be fought over and over is the battle with self, for self will ever seek to regain the controlling position, from which it was ousted at conversion. There can be no peace while self is in control, but if the power of God is constantly claimed, and the new life within continually exercised, the old nature may be held in subjection.

Stability and Assurance

If a person is to reach his highest development, if he is to accomplish that which his talents and aptitudes make possible, he must have a sense of security, the knowledge that the foundations of his being are secured to something strong and abiding. In its supreme manifestation this peace can be experienced only by one who has built his life upon the Rock of ages.

“Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusts in Thee. Trust you in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength [“A Rock of ages,” margin].” Isaiah 26: 3, 4.

What a weight of uncertainty, worry, and anxiety drops from their shoulders when men commit the keeping of their souls to God! A heavenly calm possesses their souls, for they know that their heavenly Father has a perfect plan for their life, and if they will but place their hands in His, He will lead them into a life of victory, joy, and peace. Even if we cannot always see the way, or understand why, we can fully trust Him. We may say: I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.” 2 Timothy 1:12.

“God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves! Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best, and who plans for the good of His creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction.

“It is a mistake to entertain the thought that God is pleased to see His children suffer. All heaven is interested in the happiness of man. Our heavenly Father does not close the avenues of joy to any of His creatures. The divine requirements call upon us to shun those indulgences that would bring suffering and disappointment, that would close to us the door of happiness and heaven.” – “Steps to Christ.”

As we trust ourselves wholly to God we may enjoy a peace which nothing can destroy. There will be times when we are filled with abounding joy, and our exulting spirit sings: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” Psalm 27:1.

There will be other times when trials and perplexities crowd close, ready to destroy our peace. Then the Savior Himself will whisper: In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” Isaiah 30: 15.

On this sure foundation, free from the wastage of worry or the distraction of a divided heart, we may serve God all the days of our life, glorifying Him alike in sickness and health, in prosperity or adversity, in joy or in sorrow.

When it is installed a great machine is bolted securely to a solid, immovable foundation: then as the power is turned on, and its gears mesh, its wheels revolve, and its various parts move, it will work with smoothness and precision. If its foundation were unsound, or if it were insecurely fastened, so as to allow of the slightest vibration or movement on its bed, It would quickly be ruined.

Quiet Times

This quietness and confidence of spirit is not something that is given to us once and for all. It is a tender plant and must be cultivated. Those crowding growths that would choke and destroy it must be ruthlessly weeded out. It must be given an atmosphere that will continually promote its growth.

“It takes a little peace, a little quiet, and a little silence to grow a soul.” There must be time for quiet meditation, for yielding to the soothing influences of the world of nature, for communion with God in prayer and the study of His Word. No life can afford to be so busy, even with right and necessary tasks, that there is no time for quietness.

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There should be a time and a place daily kept sacred by the presence of God. In the dewy freshness of the early morning, before the burdens of the busy day are taken up, there should be a trysting-time with the Master. He will draw near to fortify the spirit, and to prepare it for whatever unknown perils the day may hold. Refreshed with the water of salvation, strengthened with the bread of life, and armed with the whole armor of God, we may daily go out to meet the new day.

Again at night, when the day's burdens are laid down, and rest comes to the weary body, the soul should also seek and find the perfect rest and peace that come alone from God.

It is natural in the hours of daylight, with the broad sunlight revealing the material world, and the vastness of space veiled with misty blue, to find that the attention is concentrated upon the daily, tasks that provide for the body. But the night has a lesson that all will do well to learn. As the glories of the sunset change and fade and die away, the eyes, still uplifted, see that the veil of blue is vanishing. The stars begin to appear, one here, one there, then in shining companies, until the deep, dark background is filled with quivering, pulsing points of light. The great masses that fill the landscape in daylight have blended with the darkness, and mountains and trees are seen in shadowy silhouette.

These evening hours bring peace to those who yield themselves to quiet meditation. The "huge and thoughtful night" draws near to soothe and calm the mind, and fill it with deep thoughts. Under its influence the little cares of the day slip aside, and life gains a truer perspective as the vastness of the universe shows above our little world.

"Between the days, the weary days,
He drops the darkness and -the dews."

But too many do not listen to the message of peace, and go on worrying, hurrying, working with feverish haste, and under constant tension and strain.

"Come you yourselves apart, and rest awhile," is the message that each quiet nightfall speaks to the weary, feverish heart. Not by relapsing at once to sleep is this rest found; then the burdens wait by the pillow to be resumed with returning day. But in the hush of evening, with earth blotted out and heaven stooping low, a deep peace will fill the mind with rest.

But the silent speech of night alone is not enough. The gracious invitation to come apart and rest was spoken by Christ Himself, showing how urgent is the need, and that the peace we crave can be found only in fellowship and communion with Him.

"The rushing stream may turn the wheels of industry, but it can never catch the reflection of the sky." The majority of men and women rush through life like the turbid waters of a swollen river charged with sediment, and heedless of the beautiful country through which they pass. But here and there are quiet souls who have come apart.

Sometimes along the river's course an old, disused channel will be seen running back under tree-fringed banks. Its still reaches of water are clear and transparent, for the sediment has settled; not a ripple mars the perfect stillness of its surface. Leaning over it, trees and ferns see their graceful forms reflected, and clouds and blue sky are mirrored there.

Even thus are the lives of those who have found the strength of quiet meditation. The dregs of earth cannot remain where there is peace, and tranquil lives mirror alike the beauty surrounding them, and the light of heaven above.

Quiet from God

It was the constant consciousness that every moment of His life was in harmony with God that filled the soul of Christ with peace. This peace, His own peace, He gives to us. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14: 27.

"Quiet from God! How beautiful to keep
This treasure the All Merciful bath given;
To feel when we awake, and when we sleep
Its incense round us, like a breath from heaven.
To sojourn in the world, and yet apart;
To dwell with God, and still with man to feel;

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To bear about for ever in the heart
The gladness which His Spirit does reveal.”

The one essential is a living connection with God. While this is maintained, nothing can shake the peace that blesses the soul with an infinite calm even amidst disappointment and sorrow. But if that connection wears thin and breaks, no outward prosperity can make up for the disquiet that takes possession of the life.

This union with God needs to be jealously guarded, for development of the spiritual nature means eternal life, while neglect means eternal death. To help man remember, God has included in His law a precept that guards the rest of the body and the peace of the soul.

Around the Sabbath commandment cluster thoughts of this rest. Man was created on the sixth day of creation week, and on the seventh day kept the first Sabbath. Thus the first purpose of the Sabbath was not to provide rest from toil, but time to become acquainted with the only true God, whom to know is life eternal. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day.” Exodus 20: 8-11.

Then came sin, and, after long years, the captivity of God’s people. By mighty miracles God delivered them, and now they were to remember on each Sabbath that it was God who had delivered them. “Remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.” Deuteronomy 5: 15.

Again, the Sabbath commemorates the deliverance from sin that each soul who comes to Christ experiences. “Moreover also I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Ezekiel 20:12.

All that the soul needs is found in Christ. This glorious reality is experienced when sin is renounced, and the soul is created anew. How to maintain this satisfying experience in the ebb and flow of daily life is the Christian’s greatest problem. But for that God has made abundant provision. “For we which have believed do enter into rest.” “There remains therefore a keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God.” Hebrews 4: 3, 9, margin.

The Sabbath is the memorial of creation, of deliverance, and of salvation. But it is more than a memorial of salvation. It is one of God’s great means of maintaining the experience of salvation. Week by week, as Christians keep tryst with the Lord on the day that He has appointed, they may receive anew the strength and life that sustain the spiritual being.

“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.” Matthew 11:28, 29.

10. The Holy Spirits Presence

The divine Spirit is given especially to the church as the indwelling presence of God with man. He is the Spirit of truth, and, through the Word, guides into all truth. The power of Pentecost is for us today. In these last days we may ask for and expect the greatest manifestation of the Spirit’s power ever given to men.

IN previous chapters mention has been made of the part the Holy Spirit acts in the salvation and transformation of human nature. The new birth is accomplished by the Spirit, and the progressive transformation that changes human character into the likeness of the divine is brought about by the continually exerted power of the indwelling Spirit.

But so little is the power of the Spirit understood in His relation to the Christian life, so great is the work He is waiting to do in our hearts. And because it is impossible to live the life of faith and victory without His constant help, we shall study a little of what has been given to us in the gift of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead, one with the Father and the Son in purpose, in power, and in eternity of existence. Of the nature and person of the Holy Spirit we are told practically nothing, and therefore it would be presumption to seek to penetrate mysteries which God has not revealed. “He shall not speak of Himself,” we are told; so in the Word of God, the only possible source for us to seek

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divine revelations, the Spirit who inspired it remains silent regarding Himself.

The Spirit's work and power were known in the world from the very first. At creation we read that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of, the waters." Genesis 1:2. Then in warning of the coming Flood God said: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." Genesis 6:5. And through the days of the patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets the Holy Spirit manifested Himself. But this was more often as an external power coming mightily upon a man to enable him to do a special work. The case of Gideon is typical. After he answered the call of God we read, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon ["clothed," margin] Gideon." Judges 6:34.

But in the New Testament we see a new and greater manifestation of the Spirit's power. Christ's life and ministry on earth, His death for our sins, His return to His Father as the representative of humanity, opened a new and living way to the very presence of God. In the person of Jesus, human nature, sinless and victorious, was beside the throne of God. And to complete the circle, the Holy Spirit came to earth as the representative of God with man.

Pentecost marked the enthronement of Christ in heaven and the coming of the Spirit to earth. It was the fulfillment of Christ's word, the realization of the Father's promise.

Before He left them, Christ bade His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Comforter: "Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry you in the city of Jerusalem, until you be endued with power from on high." Luke 24: 49.

And in His last long, intimate talk with the disciples in the upper room and on the moonlight walk to the garden of Gethsemane, Christ told them much of the Spirit's coming, and of the work that He would do.

A Divine Indwelling Presence

Notice first the seemingly strange statement: It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." John 15: 7.

The promise of the Spirit is for us today as much as for the early disciples. It was better for the disciples that the bodily presence of Jesus be withdrawn from them, for the Spirit's presence would be closer to each and available to all. "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. He dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." John 14: 16-18.

In these simple, tender words Christ expressed to His sorrowing disciples the glorious truth and the sublime mystery of the divine indwelling presence of the Spirit. This is what no other religion can offer - the might of divine power dwelling in the human life, and bringing to it the measureless resources of omnipotence. It is by the Spirit that Christ dwells in the heart, and the Spirit is so fully identified with Jesus that He is called the Spirit of Jesus. Notice all that comes into a human life when the Spirit dwells in the heart:

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God." Ephesians 3:16-21.

It is this indwelling presence that makes a man victorious over sin, that fills him with peace in the midst of trouble, that gives him the buoyant sense of being more than equal to whatever the enemy may bring against him.

The Spirit and the Word

Another work of the Spirit is to teach truth, and to make the words of Jesus shine out in their full meaning. How often, because of their dullness of mind and their preconceived ideas, the disciples had not understood the words of Jesus, nor comprehended the truth He had tried to impart! The presence of the Holy Spirit, called the "Spirit of truth," would change all this. He would make clear to them what had been obscure.

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for lie shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come." John 14:26; 16:13.

The Holy Spirit was to bring to the remembrance of the disciples the spoken words of Christ, and

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to clear away their misconceptions of the truth He taught. The same Spirit who had such care over the spoken words and teachings of Jesus is equally ready today to guide seeking souls into truth, to drive away the shadows of uncertainty and preconceived ideas, and to open up to men the deeper meaning of the written Word. It is not an exaggeration to say that it is impossible to understand the teaching of Scripture, or to discern divine truth, without the direct illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Scriptures were given to men through the Holy Spirit. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. The Spirit is the author of the Bible, and He directed the minds of chosen men that they might set forth divine truth in human language. The Bible is thus the voice of the Spirit. Through its words He impresses human hearts, and convicts men of their sinful state and their need of a Savior. And without the presence and enlightenment of the Spirit, the Bible has no converting power. "Without the Spirit the Bible is dead; and without the Bible the Holy Spirit is dumb."

The Power of Pentecost

These promises were fulfilled to the disciples at Pentecost. They became transformed men, charged with power, filled with life. No longer were they dull, fearful, self-centered. Before this time, they loved their Lord, and promised to serve Him. But they were ever seeking personal recognition, and they shrank from reproach for His sake. Now they thought not of the highest place, and boldly spoke out for their Lord, and with such power that thousands who had been indifferent or antagonistic, seeing the radiant joy and the divine power they had, surrendered to God in a day. In the space of a single generation the entire world was lighted with the glory of the gospel, and men and women from every race and tongue, and from every class and station, were united in one great fellowship of love and power and harmony. All recognized that this great work was done through the power of the Spirit.

Earnest Christians today look back to Pentecost and long for that same simplicity, love, life, and power that the coming of the Spirit gave to the early church. But Pentecost did not exhaust the divine resources, nor were the early disciples to receive the full and final display of God's power. The first sermon preached at Pentecost showed that the demonstration there given, though marvelous beyond all human experience, was only the beginning; that the gift of the Spirit is for the church in all ages. Peter's word to those under conviction was: "Repent and be baptized. . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2.: 38, 39.

For Us Today

Thus the promise of the Spirit is for us today as much as for the early disciples. It is for those in all times and all places where hearts respond to the call of God. He would leave none to battle alone against the power of sin, but would have all know about and claim the mighty help of His Spirit.

If we were more conscious of the power that God is longing to pour into the frail earthen vessels of our human lives. If petty earthly interests did not absorb so much of our attention; if we did not cling to some cherished sin, we should all receive the fullness of divine power. How we should pray for the in filling of the Spirit! How we should daily seek to conform our lives to the perfect standard God sets before us, claiming for this the help He is waiting to give!

Read what one noted Bible commentator says of the gift of the Spirit-

"The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil have been strengthening for centuries and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer."

A careful reading of the Bible will show that in no particular does this paragraph overestimate the importance of the Spirit's work. To say that without the Spirit the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail, and that the Spirit makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's Redeemer surely puts a high estimate on the importance of the Holy Spirit in the plan of redemption.

But when we remember that it is only in response to the wooing of the Spirit that a soul ever turns to God, that without this quickening, awakening power no soul dead in trespasses and sins would ever rise to walk in newness of life, we know that Christ's sacrifice would indeed have been in vain had no one ever availed himself of it. And after having brought about the new birth, only as the Spirit ministers constantly to subdue sin, to prompt to righteousness, and to uplift the entire nature is it possible for one to be transformed into the divine image.

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Receiving the Spirit and submitting to His guidance are vital to every Christian. There is nothing savoring of emotionalism or fanaticism in the ministry of the Spirit. The presence of the Spirit is manifested by love for and obedience to every command of the Word of God, by unselfish devotion to Christ, by purity and holiness of life. The Spirit is promised to every Christian, and therefore we should pray for and expect to receive His indwelling presence and continual guidance.

The importance of the ministry of the Spirit cannot be too strongly emphasized. Of especial significance is it to us who live in these last days. The Word of God reveals that so far from becoming less and less evident as we near the end of time, we who live in these days are to witness the greatest manifestation of divine power ever given.

Under the figure of the early and the latter rain the work of the Spirit is described. In Eastern countries the early rain fell after the seed was sown, and it caused the germination and growth of the grain. But unless abundant rain fell before the harvest, the crop would fail. Thus the latter rain was of equal importance to the early, or former, rain.

The work of the Spirit since Pentecost has been to bring about the new birth and to cause growth and development of Christian character. But before the harvest, which is the end of the world, there will be a special outpouring of the Spirit's power, to bring complete deliverance from sin and perfection of character to those who seek for divine aid.

"Ask you of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." Zechariah 10:1.

"Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for He has given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain." Joel 2: 23.

Only the power of the Holy Spirit shall enable us to meet and overcome the last and fiercest attacks which the enemy will concentrate on Christians of this generation, But God has reserves of power hitherto unknown to display in behalf of earth's last and most sorely pressed generation. We may share in that power and join in that triumph.

11. The Glorious Climax

God's plan for His people is complete victory over sin; it enables a person to triumph over an evil environment. But God's plan does not reach its climax until the whole world is cleansed from every trace of sin. The second coming of Christ will do for the world what human planning can never do-it will result in the banishing of every trace and reminder of sin. Perfect men in a perfect world will live for ever to praise their Savior.

FROM different points we have viewed God's marvelous plan of salvation, and have begun to realize its vast scope, and the heights to which we may rise if we will avail ourselves of its provisions. It remains for us only to consider the end for which God has saved us, the sublime purpose toward which all the suffering and sacrifice of His plan have ever been leading.

We have shown how the grace of God in the gospel is of sufficient power to enable a man to be victorious over every evil influence surrounding him, to overcome every sinful tendency within him, and to be more than equal to every emergency that could confront him. By its miraculous, superhuman power it enables a man to live a holy life in this present evil world, and while of necessity he must live in the world, he need not be of the world, or partake of its spirit. And even at the end, when man reaches the limit of his short span of life, faith in the gospel enables him to look death in the face with a smile, and to die in triumph.

We have seen that the aim of the gospel is nothing short of total victory over sin, complete perfection of character, the full restoration of the image of God in human nature. "Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," is a promise as well as a command, and carries with it the enabling power of God to make it real.

Complete Transformation

Now notice three passages of Scripture which show that God's plan for us embraces full

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deliverance from sin, complete transformation into the likeness of Christ.

The gifts of the Spirit are to be in the church for the specific purpose of effecting this transformation, and are to abide “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:13.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” 1 John 3:2.

Those who at last shall stand in the presence of God will be there because through grace they have attained to that character which entitles them to do so. Of them it is said: “And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14: 5.

Man, with his sinful heritage and weakness of will, needs the discipline of struggle and continual effort in co-operation with the heavenly powers if he is to be an overcomer, the possessor of a character that will eternally endure. It is the unceasing warfare against evil without and within that builds moral strength and confers a fitness for eternal life.

Thus the Word of God shows that the summit of personal deliverance from sin and individual perfection may be attained in this world of sin and temptation.

A Wider Scope

But the glory of the gospel plan is that it embraces more, much more, than enabling a man to live for God in an evil environment, and to die in triumph at the end. All this, though essential to the outworking of the plan and the building of character, is but initial and preparatory.

Christ came to save that which was lost, to restore all things, to destroy the works of the devil. Therefore His plan of redemption will not reach its full completion until sin is exterminated from the entire world, and its traces erased from the earth as well as from the hearts of Christians; until not only man himself but his environment is made perfect.

This calls for a climactic change in the world as we know it. Disease and decay, sickness and pain and death press down upon every living creature, “for we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now,” waiting for the great day of deliverance.

Like the stars in their courses, knowing neither haste nor delay, the purposes of God move onward to their completion. Past, present, and future lie open to the gaze of God, and in His unfathomable wisdom He is able to order the events of history according to His will. The birth of Jesus as a babe in Bethlehem came at the precise time previously determined by God. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.” Galatians 4: 4, 5.

We have already considered the gospel of grace that came to men because of that first advent of Christ. But God reveals to us that He has more, much more for His people than what was brought within their reach by that first coming of Jesus.

His Glorious Appearing

Christ will come to earth again, not in poverty and humiliation, but in glory and power. He will come to finish what He has begun, to bring to a glorious climax the plan of redemption which came into operation away back on that tragic day when Adam and Eve fell under the power of the enemy, and brought sin and death into the world.

The second advent of Christ will institute a series of events by which the righteous will be rewarded with immortal life and for ever placed beyond the reach of sin and death; the wicked will be brought to justice, and with Satan and his followers, will be for ever destroyed. The earth will be cleansed by fire, and created anew in freshness and beauty to be the eternal home of the redeemed. These events have a time set for them in the schedule of God, as these passages of Scripture reveal:

“He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Acts 3: 20, 21.

And Paul looks beyond to the appointed time when with every element of discord removed, there will once more be one vital spirit, one living purpose, uniting the vast creation of God. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.” Ephesians 1: 10.

There seems to me to be a kind of inevitability about the return of Christ, a kind of moral necessity

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rooted in the very nature of things. What I mean is this: I can't bring myself to believe that the seesaw between good and evil is to go on for ever. I can't believe that we are going on for ever as we are going on now. I find myself compelled to believe in some kind of consummation. Further, I can't believe that that consummation will mean the triumph of the forces of evil. Something deep within me won't let me believe that. And so I find myself compelled to believe that one day Christ will be enthroned in His universe; that the crown shall be placed on the only head that is worthy to wear it; that He shall reign whose right it is to reign." Revelation J. Arthur Lewis, in a sermon published in the Australian Christian World.

The Weakness of Human Plans

In their blindness and self sufficiency men refuse to look at God's revealed plans for this earth; they boastfully claim to be able to bring about the ideal state by means of better economic systems, fairer legislation, and kindred schemes. But through the ages men have shown themselves unable to realize fully even their own planning. Selfishness, greed, laziness, and lack of cooperation have repeatedly brought idealistic schemes to naught.

Supposing, however, that men were able to establish on earth such a system as they have dreamed and planned. Would it meet human need? By no means, for no human plan can deal with the greatest problems that confront mankind, or supply the needs for which his whole being cries out. Pain and sickness and death are not to be legislated out of existence. No theoretically perfect plan or system can banish heart-ache or heartbreak. Human schemes cannot change the human heart, where sin lies entrenched, to manifest itself in its myriad forms and bring war and agony and death in its train.

God's word to us is: "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, said the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55: 8, 9.

Though "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him," yet "God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit." Scattered throughout the Word are passages and promises that describe as well as human language can the beauty and the bliss of the new earth state, and these passages and promises have ever been a source of comfort and strength to the saints of God as they have passed through fiery trials and sore tribulations.

The Incorruptible Inheritance

Let us now look by the eye of faith upon that "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith into salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." I Peter 1:4,5.

First of all, the new earth will be no mere patched-up edition of this old sin-cursed earth. The cleansing fires of God will burn up every trace of sin before the earth is created anew.

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3: 10-13.

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65: 17. John the beloved saw this new earth in vision, for he says: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . . . And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." Revelation 21: 1-5.

"There shall be no more curse." Revelation 22: 3. The new earth will be of surpassing loveliness, free of thorns and thistles, with no deserts or waste places. . "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice, even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God. . . . In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." Isaiah 35: 1-7.

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Isaiah 55: 13.

Violence, cruelty, and savagery are manifest in the animal world, as savage beasts and birds prey upon one another or upon the meek and helpless creatures in their power. "Nature, red in tooth and claw," proclaims that a spirit of antagonism to the spirit of love and peace rules in the hearts of all created things.

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But in the new earth the natures of the animals will be changed. No longer will they prey upon each other. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the calf together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall play his hand on the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah 11:6-9.

There we shall be eternally free from sickness, weariness, pain, and death.

We Shall Be Changed

The bodies we now have are subject to weakness, weariness, and disease. What suffering, sorrow, and disappointment have come to the world because of pain and sickness! What hearts have been torn asunder, what plans left half completed, by the cruel hand of death!

But there we shall have bodies vibrant with the freshness and vigor of eternal youth, eternally free from sickness, weariness, pain, and death. For at His coming, Christ "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Philippians 3: 21;

"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in it moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. . . . For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15: 51-53.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." Isaiah 35: 5, 6. "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." Isaiah 33: 24.

Here our hearts are often wrung with anguish, and our eyes weep the bitter tears of grief. But there "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21: 4.

At last men enter upon a life that is life indeed. How different it is from the narrow existence we know now, dulled with pain, clouded with uncertainty stunted by ignorance, darkened with grief, and shortened by sickness! Now, with clear minds and unwearied powers, without hindrance or impediment they begin to realize the meaning of the Master when He said, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. John 10: 10.

"There immortal minds will contemplate with never-failing delight the wonders of creative power, the mysteries of redeeming love. There will be no cruel, deceiving foe to tempt to forgetfulness of God. Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new Wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body....

"The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all flow life and light and gladness throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love." – "The Great Controversy," pages 677, 678.

God's great plan of righteousness by faith has triumphed gloriously. The earth is peopled by a race of men and women who have been rescued from the Pit of sin. Who from free will have chosen to serve God, and who, claiming by faith all that He had done for them, were I able to overcome sin and to conquer in His name.