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The Jarvis Street Pulpit

The Appetite for Spiritual Food

A Sermon by Dr. T. T. Shields

Preached in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, Toronto, Sunday Evening, August 4th, 1935

(Stenographically Reported)

"If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious."—1 Peter 2:3.

CERTAIN things are said to be contingent upon a principle stated in our text, "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious". It is here implied that being a Christian, a child of God, a possessor of and being possessed by the salvation that is in Christ, fundamentally, elementarily, consists in "tasting" of the graciousness of the Lord. And this evening I shall deal with a simple matter, — and please remember that, simplicity is not synonymous with superficiality. That which is simple may, at the same time, be very profound; and that which is fundamental must always lie beneath the surface of things. We shall concern ourselves therefore with a consideration of the elementary principles that are fundamental to the Christian hope.

It is here assumed as a fact that the Lord is gracious, and that whoever is a Christian has, by some means, come to an understanding and experience of that great fact, the graciousness of the Lord.

In dealing with people, and discussing with them their hope for this life and the next, I have been impressed again and again with the necessity for making the matter, very, very, plain. On Friday Brother Wilmot and I were motoring, and we stopped to enquire of a man who was standing on the sidewalk the way to get on to a certain highway. He laboured at it. He told us — or tried to tell us — how to go; but I declare, when he got through I was more in the dark than ever. I said to Brother Wilmot, "That man reminds me of some preachers." You have heard of the coloured man who, intending to say that he would expound the text, said, "And now, my breddern, we shall proceed to confound the text." I have known many preachers who "confound" their text, and make confusion worse confounded by their discussion of religious matters.

The sun shines upon us without effort. The flowers grow without labour. The whole machinery of the universe proceeds without friction, so that even the birds find their place, as do the little children. Why should it be supposed that our great God, designing to save men, should make salvation to be so complicated a thing that scarcely anybody can understand it? Why should we add to that which God has written, or make complex that which God has designedly made so simple?

I.

SALVATION CONSISTS IN KNOWING THE LORD, somehow or another coming to know the graciousness of the Lord. And because of the confusion to which I have referred it becomes necessary sometimes, if we would instruct those who need instruction, to deal with things negatively as well as positively. But I lay this down as our first and fundamental proposition, that whatever else it means, and by whatever means that great desideratum is accomplished, salvation consists in knowing the graciousness of the Lord Himself.

Therefore it does not depend upon contact with a deputy. How often great men, or at least men in positions of responsibility, upon whose shoulders great burdens rest, and to whose hands a multitude of duties have been committed — how often it is difficult to get at the man himself, to get past those who are appointed to relieve him of such matters as may be attended to by somebody else. The president usually has a vice-president, and the manager has an assistant-manager, and sometimes a second assistant; and all of them one or several secretaries. In a large outer office is a desk with a word above it, "Information." To get through the

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outer door, and past all these intermediaries to the person with whom you desire to deal is sometimes an exceedingly difficult matter.

In our system of government the King is represented by many deputies, surrounded by a cabinet, every one of whom acts in the royal name. Then there is all the elaborate machinery of justice, all carried out in the name of the King; and in the wide-flung empire of which he is the head, there are multiplied governments and lieutenant-governors. How remote from us the King himself seems to be! Perhaps in our littleness, and because of our disposition to magnify our littleness, and to think we are exalted by the multiplicity of systems and deputies, we import into our thinking some such conception as that in respect to our approach to God. Thus there are many, supposedly, standing between us and the Lord, who are said to be authorized to act in His behalf.

Nothing could be farther from the truth than that. Our gracious God has no deputies. "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." In order to be saved, we must get past all intermediate agencies, we must somehow get to the person of the Lord Himself, and, as one of our brethren says who comes frequently to prayer-meeting, know experimentally the graciousness of the Lord.

I wonder if there are some here this evening in whose minds that subtle suggestion has found a place, that a church or a priest, or a minister said to be in holy orders and crowned with some special authority — that some such person or organization may stand between the soul and God; and mediate His grace. It is not true. How some people magnify their office! How objectionable that little brief authority is sometimes! The smaller the man, the more important he is. If the Lord had designated His authority to any mortal man, how truly he would exalt

himself. So indeed has the head of that strange system known as Roman Catholicism done. He dares to speak of himself as God's vice-gerent, the vicar of Christ, vicariously exercising divine authority. There never was a greater lie perpetrated by the devil than that. No priest, no church, no pope, no minister of any name, has been authorized to act as the Lord's deputy through whom, without personal contact with the Lord Himself, a man may know what it is to be saved. We must personally know the graciousness of the Lord.

If it does not consist in contact with a deputy, *neither does it consist in the acceptance of a doctrine.* I have known people who were very orthodox — do not misunderstand me, but I verily believe I have met such people who have really, though they scarcely know it, put the Bible in God's place. It is possible to know the doctrine, the letter, of it, and to profess our great confidence in the Bible as the word of God, and yet not to have had a heart-experience of the gospel. You cannot believe the Bible too strongly for my taste; nor can you profess it too boldly for my enjoyment. Personally, I believe it with all my heart. I have not the shadow of a doubt of the unique, divine, inspiration and supreme and sovereign authority of the Bible in its entirety as the word of God. To me it is "the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever". And yet, my dear friends, fidence in the Bible as the word of God, and yet not to there is far more in salvation than merely knowing the letter of Scripture.

May I go farther than that and say that salvation is not primarily in the acceptance, the understanding, and recognition, of the particular quality of Deity. *To know something about God is not salvation.* To have a knowledge of God as revealed in Christ, in the abstract, is not salvation. So long as Jesus Christ is merely an historic person, Who lived, and died, and rose again, and Who dwells remotely in the glory, a Person of Whom the Bible speaks — if that is all I know, I may know that and still not be a Christian. I know that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," but let me tell you that salvation is not in your faith. "What! we cannot be saved without faith, can we?" No. But I have known people who made a god of their faith, who subjected it to an analysis, and boasted of its quality, saying, "I have great faith." Great faith never speaks after that fashion. Faith never magnifies itself: it always induces humility. You are not saved by your faith.

I have heard people say, "I have great faith in prayer." I have not. I have no faith in prayer at all. I marvel that a holy God ever hears the prayer of a mortal. It is a mark of the infinite condescension of grace that He ever bows down His ear to hear the cry of the poor and needy. You do not know how to pray. I do not know how to pray. Nobody knows how to pray. Nobody knows what to pray for, or how to pray as we ought. If our salvation depended upon our prayer, or upon our faith, we should never be saved. Someone says, "That is a strange thing: I thought faith was all-important." So it is, but when it is true faith it is scarcely discernible. Faith loses itself in the greatness of its object; and when we know God personally, we do not talk about our faith. The same is true of prayer. When we talk much with God, we talk little about it. I am constrained to believe that when we do really find the secret of prayer, and learn how to abide under the shadow of the almighty, that we shall talk less about our prayers than the Person to Whom they are addressed.

I have heard men report interviews they have had with certain people. I heard a man once boast that he had met President Roosevelt — but he did not tell us a thing Mr. Roosevelt said to him. But he had met Theodore Roosevelt, and tried to impress everyone with that fact. "I said to Mr. Roosevelt!" I suppose Mr. Roosevelt was greatly edified by what the gentleman had told him!

There are people who talk like that about God. "I pray! I said this, and I said that." I believe in a man's prayer, and in the genuineness of his faith, when he evinces a knowledge of God, when he speaks of what God has said to him, and of what He has been, and now is, to him. Do not examine your faith. Do not subject it to analysis, to see whether you have faith or not. How do you know you have eyesight? Do you take it out? Go to an oculist, and ask him to examine your eyes, and what will he do? He will put something before you and ask you whether you can see it. He will vary the size of the objects, and determine the quality of your sight by the ease with which you discern things objective to yourself. He may look at the eye, he may see something in the organ itself that may require treatment, he may tell you there is a defect in the organ itself. Surely you do not insist that he take your eye out, that you may see it under a microscope? He judges the quality of your sight by the clearness with which you see things objective to yourself. Prayer and faith will find their place and their legitimate exercise as we know, however that may be, who and what the Lord is.

I wonder if I may go even a step farther than that and say that *salvation does not consist in knowing or understanding even grace itself in the abstract*. It is by grace we are saved, I know. But one may be very orthodox, and glory in the grace of God, and yet not be saved. Insist as we may that salvation is of grace alone, somehow or another we must know the Lord for ourselves. Nobody can know Him for us.

I hope I shall not offend you by the illustration, but of all the stupid inventions of man I know of little to surpass in the quality of its stupidity that which is known as a godfather or a godmother. Where in the world did people dream of that? It is in the Book of Common Prayer — and there are many other silly things in the Book of Common Prayer among the many good things that are there. "Dost thou, in the name of this Child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh?" "I renounce them all." What utter folly! I think it was Mr. Spurgeon who once said that godfathers and godmothers might just as well promise that the child would grow up with auburn hair and a Roman nose! They are just as well able to effect the one as the other. Nobody can promise for you. Nobody can believe for you. Nobody has been appointed as a deputy for God, save only the One Who is Himself God, the one "Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus".

I was greatly encouraged a few months ago — led to praise the Lord, at least. Someone from out of town said to me, "Do you know that one of our best workers is a man who was converted through a chance remark of yours?" "Tell me about it," I said. "He is one of our stalwarts." As a young man he was a Roman Catholic, and at the close of a service you had conducted you said something to him, and he answered by telling you he was a Roman Catholic; to which you replied, "There is one

mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'. That was all. But that great fact burned its way into his soul, until the church, with all its sacramentarianism, slipped away; and he came to know God in Christ."

.. *There is only one way of knowing God*. If you were to read all the books in all the libraries of the world, it might not make you wiser concerning Him. "No man hath seen God at any time." No one who ever lived on this earth was ever of himself qualified to teach you and me anything about God. I care not who he is, eminent scientist, philosopher, religious leader, nobody knows anything about it. Only one Man ever saw God; only one Man ever knew God, the man Christ Jesus; but we must somehow know Him. I quote again a verse I often quote, a verse that will never wear out, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We must come into personal contact with the Lord, and know experimentally of the graciousness of the Lord, what He is essentially in Himself. We must know the Lord. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

II.

HOW, THEN, ARE WE TO KNOW HIM? In what does that knowledge consist? Here is a strange word, though a very simple one, a word that everybody here understands. You do not need to go to a dictionary to find out what it means; "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." That is rather a striking phrase, is it not? Salvation consists in "tasting" the graciousness of the Lord. What do we mean by taste? It is one of the five senses. I suppose in this case it must be designed to represent something analogous to it in our spiritual nature. There must be a kind of spiritual palate, a spiritual capacity for tasting the graciousness of the Lord. It is used in connection with this verse, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." I wonder has it occurred to you that that sense of taste is one of the first of the senses to find exercise? A child may not see, or, seeing, may see nothing. The mind is not awakened; it does not, as the phrase is, "take notice". A child does not know the difference between its parents and a stranger.. The doctor says its eyes are all right, but it cannot discern. Its ears are all right: it can hear, but not consciously. Yet it can taste, it can feel, before it can think.

It is easy to see that a soul is saved before it can think. We cannot too strongly emphasize the fact that salvation, inasmuch as it consists in knowing the Lord and His graciousness, resides in Him, proceeds from Him and to Him, and from its beginning to its end, its continuance and completion, is all of the Lord. As a matter of fact, no one can believe apart from the Spirit of God. No one can taste the graciousness of the Lord until there is, by the regenerating power of God, wrought in the soul that capacity for tasting.

Try it on an unconscious infant. Put something to the baby's lips that is bitter, and see what a face he will make. He may even cry, and protest against it. He does not know what it is, but most emphatically he says, "I do not like the taste of that." "O taste and see that the Lord is good" — "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." *There is wrought in the soul at birth, as the soul is born again, a capacity for spiritual things*. I have

had hundreds of people, during the course of my ministry, say to me virtually the same thing: "I came with the wife only because she wanted me to come to church. I was not much interested, but little by little I became interested, and began to understand. Then I found springing up within me a desire for these things, and at last the truth dawned upon me. Now I believe." Yes; but even before you believed, you "tasted". You said, "What is there about that story that seems to meet the requirements of my soul?" It was almost like getting the appetizing odor of your dinner when you were hungry. Even before you ate it you said, "That is savory meat such as I love; I believe I will go to dinner." When the gospel feast is spread, when the glories of the Lord Jesus are exhibited to our view, when we hear of the fulness of grace that is in Him, the poor sinner says, "That is what I have wanted for a long time." He almost smacks his lips as he says, "That tastes all right."

I travelled in a train in Wales a few years ago, and went into the restaurant-car. A man, his wife, and three children, came in for dinner. The father, mother, and a daughter sat at one table, and across the aisle two boys. I can see them now, bright boys sparkling with life. One of them got the menu, pushed his knife and fork to one side, placed the menu before him and studied it. Presently he said to his brother, "Well, Bob, this is what I call a little bit of all right." When the waiter came around to take his order, it did not take him long to give it: he had made up his mind. He said instantly, "I will have so-and-so." And I saw the father and mother look across and smile proudly on those sons, and have always remembered the happy way with which they sat down to the meal. "This is a little bit of all right"!

Sometimes before we have actually tasted it, when the gospel menu is spread before our hungry souls, something touches us, and we look at it and say, "That is a little bit of all right. That is exactly what this poor sinner needs." Can I explain it to you who are not Christians? No. Can you explain your taste? I cannot. I cannot explain anybody's taste — taste in matters of food, or in other matters. Very often when I travel I come to a place where the meal is served *table d'hote*, and am forced to say to the waiter, "I am sorry; this is not my day." "What do you mean?" "There is nothing there I can eat." "But," he says, "we have found it a very popular dinner." I can only say to myself, there is no accounting for taste. I have often wondered why some people like some things. I was in the north country, roundabout Kenora, on one occasion, and the pastor took me out to show me around. As we passed the home of one of his members he said, "We will run in for a few minutes, and I will introduce you." The lady of the house very cordially invited us to stay for dinner, saying as she did so, "I promise you, we will not serve onions." "What do you mean?" I asked. "Only that I happen to know you do not like onions — we read THE GOSPEL WITNESS." I have always looked upon it — well, as a sure and certain evidence of depravity on the part of the Israelites that they longed for the leeks and garlic — the onions of Egypt.

I say again, there is no accounting for taste. I am constantly told that I should not take sugar in my tea, and gallantly reply, "I will try — I will try — I will try." But for the life of me I cannot enjoy it. In notice the ladies look at me in pity for my weakness. They do not

tell us why they do not take sugar, but it is not always a matter of taste! Rather that of diet! Be that as it may, there is a variety of taste for which we cannot account. Go to your doctor and say, "Doctor, it would simplify our domestic affairs if we all liked the same things to eat. It means getting two dinners. Will you do something to change my taste?" The doctor would say, "I cannot change the nature of your palate. You will have to do your own tasting." There is some relation between the palate, the things which are palatable, and the systems that are behind the palate. One doctor told me the palate is an indication of the things our systems require. I like to think that is so when I am putting the sugar in my tea! I like to say to myself, Your system needs the sugar!

You cannot make a man like spiritual food if he has no appetite for it. There is no human doctrine or teacher who can change the spiritual palate of a man, and make him taste the graciousness of God. How can he get it? "Ye must be born again." When, by a new birth, you are made partakers of the divine nature, you acquire a spiritual palate, a spiritual desire, a desire for spiritual food — then you taste the graciousness of the Lord. Some of us know that He is gracious. Some of us have tried Him these many years, and the longer we know Him the more we love Him. We cannot understand why He should be so gracious, so infinitely gracious, with such poor sinners as we are; but we are still His, and by the goings of God upon our own spirits, and our capacity for the reception of the word of God, we know that we are Christians.

I heard a young preacher say a very good thing some years ago when we were holding a meeting in Ottawa at the time of the McMaster controversy. He said, "People have said to me, 'Is it not rather presumptuous for you, a young man, of little experience, to set up your judgment against a learned professor?' It may seem presumptuous" — then like a grandfather he said, "Let me talk to you mothers. When it comes feeding-time, do not give the baby milk. Just mix up something that looks like milk, something white that cannot be discerned from the real thing. Put it in the baby's bottle, try it on the baby — then stand back to see how quickly that bottle will be thrown on the floor. The baby knows nothing about chemistry, it has never been in a laboratory, it knows nothing about the ingredients of milk; but by a natural taste it knows the difference between milk and a substitute."

That is a commonplace, but it was a fine answer to the objection. That is what the Scripture says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." If you ask me how I know that this is the word of God, I tell you I have tasted it. How do I know by the taste? Because I have been born again, and I know when I get the "sincere milk of the word"; and I know when it is not milk. That is the trouble with many professing Christians; they go to churches where they are fed on — what is the stuff anyway? Nothing biblical, nothing scriptural; but some substitute for the "milk of the word." Pitch the bottle on the floor. Tell the preacher you do not want it. Demand the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby — "if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious". If that is in you, by the touch of God's Spirit, you have been made a new creature in Christ; you know the difference between the word of God and the word of man.

Then as we grow we shall put away these things that have no place in the Christian life, we shall put off the old man, and put on the new, and "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." That is how Christians are made. That is how they grow. That is how, at last, they are conformed in their maturity to the image and likeness of Christ. May we so trust Him and rejoice in Him for His name's sake.

Let us pray:

We thank Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast wrought in many of us that spiritual taste which assures us of a capacity for spiritual things. We do love Thee. We give but poor expression often. Children of Thine, we have often been naughty children. We have often been very foolish children. We have been unduly fond of our earthly toys. We have rebelled sometimes against the discipline of grace. Yet we thank Thee that having adopted us into Thy family, Thou hast made us Thy children by a new birth; having the life of God in us, we are Thine forevermore. May our meditation upon this truth this evening enable us more firmly, with a greater composure of spirit, with a deeper peace, to rest in the Lord, and rejoice in Him as our Saviour.

If there should be one who has come in here this evening without the assurance of salvation, minister Thy truth, we pray Thee, to such an one, opening his or her heart as Thou didst that of Lydia, opening the understanding that he or she may understand the truth of the gospel. So shall Thy name be glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

"Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He, whose word cannot be broken
Formed thee for his own abode;
On the rock of ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's wall surrounded,
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes."

—JOHN NEWTON

MARCH MISSIONARY RALLY

WHEN?—Thursday, March 7

WHERE?—Jarvis Street Baptist Church

GREAT PUBLIC MEETING AT 8.00 P.M.

Speaker: Dr. H. C. Slade

At this evening rally Dr. Slade will give an illustrated account of his recent missionary tour in the West Indies.

BE SURE TO ATTEND!

CABLE FROM DR. SLADE

Montego Bay, Jamaica,
February 23, 1957.

MR. TULLOCH'S AND MR. STRICKLAND'S CABLES RECEIVED MONDAY. DELIGHTED TO HEAR GOOD NEWS OF THE WORK. HAD BUSY WEEK PREACHING EVERY NIGHT AND TWICE ON SUNDAY. BAPTISMAL SERVICE UNIQUE. THIRTEEN BAPTIZED. JAMAICA CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OF INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FORMED MONDAY. MR. KNIGHT CHAIRMAN, SMITH SECRETARY. INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING KINGSTON THURSDAY NIGHT. INTEREST HIGH. ABOUT SIX HUNDRED PRESENT. VERY PLEASANT HERE. ANTICIPATING FEW DAYS' REST AFTER STRENUOUS ITINERARY. HAPPY BE HOME MARCH 3RD. WILL TELL YOUNG PEOPLE PRISON EXPERIENCE NEXT SUNDAY MORNING. BOTH WELL. CHRISTIAN LOVE TO MR. FLETCHER, CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

SLADE

THE WEEK-END IN JARVIS STREET

The guest preacher in Jarvis Street Church for the week-end of February 24th was Rev. George B. Fletcher of Virginia, Lecturer in Toronto Baptist Seminary. The students of the Seminary profit greatly from his expositions of Scripture, and the Jarvis Street family welcomed this opportunity of studying the Word of God under his direction.

On Thursday evening he preached a fine sermon on the fulness of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, basing his message upon the truths stated in Ezekiel 47: 1-12 and John 7:37-39.

The Sunday morning message was a most helpful exposition of the doctrine of grace, as exhibited in the kindness of David to the lame Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9:7, 8). Mephibosheth is a picture of the sinner — a helpless, hopeless cripple, suffering from the fall, with wrong thoughts of God, dwelling in a desert land. But David, the King, sought him out, and invited him to eat bread. Although slandered by those about him, Mephibosheth willingly bore reproach for his master's sake, and in due time joyfully welcomed the King on his return. Mr. Fletcher lovingly besought the sinner to enter into the blessings of grace: "Either grace will deliver you or justice will overtake you . . . Helpless sinner, come to the Christ of God." A boy responded to this invitation, desiring to be saved.

The evening message was a solemn and powerful warning concerning the righteousness and the justice of God in dealing with sin (Jude 1:4). Reprobate sinners who deliberately and persistently remain in their sin, rejecting all God's offers of mercy, will find that they will be allowed to continue, unrestrained, in their downward path. The Lord of His own sovereign will permits them to go down to their doom, punished with everlasting destruction for their sin, to the glory of His justice. But the grace of God will rescue those who have learned of the Father that they are fallen creatures and sinners, and who have learned also that Christ Jesus is the Saviour of sinners. All such will come to the Lord, and coming, they will never be cast out.

The Soul-Winner's Life and Work

(Part I)

By Charles H. Spurgeon

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."

—Proverbs 11:30.

IT SEEMS to me that there is a higher joy in looking at a body of believers than that which arises from merely regarding them as saved. Not but that there is a great joy in salvation, a joy worthy to stir the angelic harps. Think of the Saviour's agony in the ransom of every one of His redeemed, think of the work of the Holy Spirit in every renewed heart, think of the love of the Father as resting upon every one of the regenerate: I could not, if I took up my parable for a month, set forth all the mass of joy that is to be seen in a multitude of believers if we only look at what God has done *for* them, and promised *to* them, and will fulfil *in* them. But there is yet a wider field of thought, and my mind has been traversing it all this day — the thought of the capacities of service contained in a numerous band of believers, the possibilities of blessing others which lie within the bosoms of regenerate persons. We must not think so much of what we already are as to forget what the Lord may accomplish by us for others. Here are the coals of fire, but who shall describe the conflagration which they may cause?

We ought to regard the Christian Church, not as a luxurious hostelry where Christian gentlemen may each one dwell at his ease in his own inn, but as a barracks in which soldiers are gathered together to be drilled and trained for war. We should regard the Christian Church, not as an association for mutual admiration and comfort, but as an army with banners, marching to the fray, to achieve victories for Christ, to storm the strongholds of the foe, and to add province after province to the Redeemer's kingdom. We may view converted persons gathered into church membership as so much wheat in the granary. God be thanked that it is there, and that so far the harvest has rewarded the sower; but far more soul-inspiring is the view when we regard those believers as each one likely to be made a living centre for the extension of the kingdom of Jesus, for then we see them sowing the fertile valleys of our land, and promising ere long to bring forth some thirty, some forty, some fifty, and some a hundredfold. The capacities of life are enormous, one becomes a thousand in a marvellously brief space. Within a short time a few grains of wheat would suffice to seed the whole world, and a few true saints might suffice for the conversion of all nations. Only take that which comes of one year, store it well, sow it all, again store it next year, and then sow it all again, and the multiplication almost exceeds the power of computation. Oh, that every Christian were thus year by year the Lord's seed corn! If all the wheat in the world had perished except a single grain, it would not take many years to replenish all the earth, and sow her fields and plains; but in a far shorter time, in the power of the Holy Spirit, one Paul or one Peter would have evangelised all lands. View yourselves as grains of wheat predestined to seed the world. That man lives grandly who is as earnest as if the very existence of Christianity

depended upon himself, and is determined that to all men within his reach shall be made known the unsearchable riches of Christ.

If we whom Christ is pleased to use as His seed corn were only all scattered and sown as we ought to be, and were all to sprout and bring forth the green blade and the corn in the ear, what a harvest there would be! Again would it be fulfilled, "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains" — a very bad position for it — "the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." May God grant us to feel some degree of the Holy Spirit's quickening power while we talk together, not so much about what God has done *for* us as about what God may do *by* us, and how far we may put ourselves into a right position to be used by Him!

There are two things in the text, and these are found laid out with much distinctness in its two sentences. The first is, *the life of the believer is, or ought to be, full of soul-blessing*: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." In the second place, *the pursuit of the believer ought always to be soul-winning*. The second is much the same as the first, only the first head sets forth our unconscious influence, and the second our efforts which we put forth with the avowed object of winning souls for Christ.

Let us begin at the beginning, because the second cannot be carried out without the first: without fulness of life within there cannot be an overflow of life to others. It is of no use for any of you to try to be soul-winners if you are not bearing fruit in your own lives. How can you serve the Lord with your lips if you do not serve Him with your lives? How can you preach His gospel with your tongues, when with hands, feet and hearts you are preaching the devil's gospel, and setting up antichrist by your practical unholiness? We must first have life and bear personal fruit to the divine glory, and then out of our example will spring the conversion of others. Let us go to the fountainhead, and see how the believer's own life is essential to his being useful to others.

THE LIFE OF THE BELIEVER IS FULL OF SOUL-BLESSING.

This fact we shall consider by means of a few observations growing out of the text; and, first, let us remark that *the believer's outward life comes as a matter of fruit from him*. This is prominent to notice. "The fruit of the righteous" — that is to say, his life — is not a thing fastened upon him, but it grows out of him. It is not a garment, which he puts off and on, but it is inseparable from himself. The sincere man's religion is the man himself, and not a cloak for his concealment. True godliness is the natural outgrowth of a renewed nature, not the forced growth of pious hothouse excitement. Is it not natural for a vine to bear clusters of grapes? natural for a palm tree to bear dates? Certainly, as natural as it is for the apples of Sodom to be found on the trees of

Sodom, and for noxious plants to produce poisonous berries. When God gives a new nature to His people, the life which comes out of that new nature springs spontaneously from it. The man who has a religion which is not part and parcel of himself will by-and-by discover that it is worse than useless to him. The man who wears his piety like a mask at a carnival, so that, when he gets home, he changes from a saint to a savage, from an angel to a devil, from John to Judas, from a benefactor to a bully — such a man, I say, knows very well what formalism and hypocrisy can do for him, but he has no vestige of true religion. Fig trees do not bear figs on certain days, and thorns at other times; but they are true to their nature at all seasons.

Those who think that godliness is a matter of vestment, and has an intimate relation with blue, and scarlet, and fine linen, are consistent if they keep their religion to the proper time for the wearing of their sacred pomposities; but he who has discovered what Christianity is knows that it is much more a life than an act, a form, or a profession. Much as I love the creed of Christendom, I am ready to say that true Christianity is far more a life than a creed. It is a creed, and it has its ceremonies, but it is mainly a life; it is a divine spark of heaven's own flame which falls into the human bosom and burns within, consuming much that lies hidden in the soul, and then at last, as a heavenly life, flaming forth, so as to be seen and felt by those around. Under the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, a regenerate person becomes like that bush in Horeb, which was all aglow with Deity. The God within him makes him shine so that the place around him is holy ground, and those who look at him feel the power of his hallowed life.

Dear brethren, we must take care that our religion is more and more a matter of outgrowth from our souls.

Many professors are hedged about with, "You must not do this, and you must do that." But there is a doctrine, too often perverted, which is, nevertheless, a blessed truth, and ought to dwell in your hearts. "Ye are not under the law, but under grace;" hence you do not obey the will of God because you hope to earn heaven thereby, or dream of escaping from divine wrath by your own doings, but because there is a life in you which seeks after that which is holy, pure, right and true, and cannot endure that which is evil. You are careful to maintain good works, not from either legal hopes or legal fears, but because there is a holy thing within you, born of God, which seeks, according to its nature, to do that which is pleasing to God. Look to it more and more that your religion is real, true, natural, vital — not artificial, constrained, superficial, a thing of times, days, places, a fungus produced by excitement, a fermentation generated by meetings and stirred by oratory. We all need a religion which can live either in a wilderness or in a crowd; a religion which will show itself in every walk of life, and in every company. Give me the godliness which is seen at home especially around the fireside, for it is never more beautiful than there; that is seen in the battle and tussle of ordinary business among scoffers and gainsayers as well as among Christian men. Show me the faith which can defy the lynx eyes of the world, and walk fearlessly where all scow with the fierce eyes of hate, as well as where there are observers to sympathise, and friends to judge leniently. May you be filled with the life of the Spirit, and your whole conduct and conversation be the natural and blessed outgrowth of that Spirit's indwelling!

Note, next, that the fruit which comes from a Christian is fruit worthy of his character: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life." Each tree bears its own fruit, and is known by it. The righteous man bears righteous fruit; and do not let us be at all deceived, brethren, or fall into any error about this, "he that doeth righteousness is righteous," and "he that doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." We are prepared, I hope, to die for the doctrine of justification by faith, and to assert before all adversaries that salvation is not of works; but we also confess that we are justified by a faith which produces works, and if any man has a faith which does not produce good works, it is the faith of devils. Saving faith appropriates the finished work of the Lord Jesus, and so saves by itself alone, for we are justified by faith without works; but the faith which is without works cannot bring salvation to any man. We are saved by faith without works, but not by a faith that is without works, for the real faith that saves the soul works by love and purifies the character. If you can cheat across the counter, your hope of heaven is a cheat, too; though you can pray as prettily as anybody, and practise acts of outward piety as well as any other hypocrite, you are deceived if you expect to be right at last. If as a servant you are lazy, lying and loitering, or if as a master you are hard, tyrannical and unchristianlike towards your men, your fruit shows that you are a tree of Satan's own orchard, and bear apples which will suit his tooth. If you can practise tricks of trade, and if you can lie — and many do lie every day about their neighbour or about their goods! — you may talk as you like about being justified by faith, but all liars will have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, and amongst the biggest liars you will be, for you are guilty of the lie of saying, "I am a Christian," whereas you are not. A false profession is one of the worst of lies, since it brings the utmost dishonour upon Christ and His people. The fruit of the righteous is righteousness: the fig tree will not bring forth thorns, neither shall we gather grapes from thistles. The tree is known by its fruit, and if we cannot judge men's hearts, and must not try to do so, we can judge their lives; and I pray God we may all be ready to judge our own lives, and see if we are bringing forth righteous fruit, for if not, we are not righteous men.

Let it, however, never be forgotten that the fruit of the righteous, though it comes from him naturally, for his new-born nature yields the sweet fruit of obedience, yet it is always the result of grace, and the gift of God. No truth ought to be remembered more than this, "From Me is thy fruit found." We can bring forth no fruit except as we abide in Christ. The righteous shall flourish as a branch, and only as a branch. How does a branch flourish? By its connection with the stem, and the consequent inflowing of the sap; and so, though the righteous man's righteous actions are his own, yet they are always produced by the grace which is imparted to him, and he never dares to take any credit for them, but he sings, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give praise." If he fails, he blames himself; if he succeeds, he glorifies God. Imitate his example. Lay every fault, every weakness, every infirmity at your own door; and if you fall in any respect short of perfection — and I am sure you do — take all that to yourself, and do not excuse yourself; but if there be any virtue, any praise, any true desire, any real prayer, anything that

is good, ascribe it all to the Spirit of God. Remember, the righteous man would not be righteous unless God had made him righteous, and the fruit of righteousness would never come from him unless the divine sap within him had produced that acceptable fruit. To God alone be all honour and glory.

The main lesson of the passage is that this outburst of life from the Christian, this consequence of life within him, this fruit of his soul, becomes a blessing to others. Like a tree, it yields shade and sustenance to all around. It is a tree of life, an expression which I cannot fully work out as I would wish, for there is a world of instruction compressed into the illustration. That which to the believer himself is fruit becomes to others a tree: it is a singular metaphor, but by no means a lame one. From the child of God there falls the fruit of holy living, even as an acorn drops from the oak; this holy living becomes influential and produces the best results in others, even as the acorn becomes itself an oak and lends its shade to the birds of the air. The Christian's holiness becomes a tree of life. I suppose it means a living tree, a tree calculated to give life and sustain it in others. A fruit becomes a tree! A tree of life! Wonderful result, this! Christ in the Christian produces a character which becomes a tree of life. The outward character is the fruit of the inner life; this outer life itself grows from a fruit into a tree, and as a tree it bears fruit in others to the praise and glory of God. Dear brothers and sisters, I know some of God's saints who live very near to Him, and they are evidently a tree of life, for their very shadow is comforting, cooling, and refreshing to many weary souls. I have known the young, the tried, the downcast, go to them, sit beneath their shade, and pour out the tale of their troubles, and they have felt it a rich blessing to receive their sympathy, to be told of the faithfulness of the Lord, and to be guided in the way of wisdom. There are a few good men in this world whom to know is to be rich. Such men are libraries of gospel truth; but they are better than books, for the truth in them is written on living pages. Their character is a true and living tree; it is not a mere post of the dead wood of doctrine, bearing an inscription, and rotting while it does so, but it is a vital, organized, fruit-producing thing, a plant of the Lord's right-hand planting.

Not only do some saints give comfort to others but they also yield them spiritual nourishment. Well-trained Christians become nursing fathers and nursing mothers, strengthening the weak, and binding up the wounds of the broken-hearted. So, too, the strong, bold, generous deeds of large-hearted Christians are of great service to their fellow-Christians, and tend to raise them to a higher level. You feel refreshed by observing how they act; their patience in suffering, their courage in danger, their holy faith in God, their happy faces under trial, — all these nerve you for your own conflicts. In a thousand ways, the sanctified believer's example acts in a healing and comforting way to his brethren, and assists in raising them above anxiety and unbelief. Even as the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations, so the words and deeds of saints are medicine for a thousand maladies.

And then what fruit, sweet to the taste of the godly, instructed believers bear! We can never trust in men as we trust in the Lord, but the Lord can cause the members to bless us in their measure, even as their Head is

ever ready to do. Jesus alone is the Tree of Life, but He makes some of His servants to be instrumentally to us little trees of life, by whom He gives us fruit of the same sort that He bears Himself, for He puts it there, and it is Himself in His saints causing them to bring forth golden apples, with which our souls are gladdened. May we every one of us be made like our Lord, and may His fruit be found upon our boughs!

We have put into the tomb many of the saints who have fallen asleep, and among them there were some of whom I will not at this moment speak particularly, whose lives as I look back upon them are still a tree of life to me. I pray God that I may be like them. Many of you knew them, and if you will only recall their holy, devoted lives, the influence they have left behind will still be a tree of life to you. They being dead yet speak; hear ye their eloquent exhortations! Even in their ashes live their wonted fires; kindle your souls at their warmth. Their noble examples are the endowments of the church; her children are ennobled and enriched as they remember their walk of faith and labour of love. Beloved, may we every one of us be true benedictions to the churches in whose gardens we are planted! "Oh!" says one, "I am afraid I am not much like a tree, for I feel so weak and insignificant." If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you have the commencement of the tree beneath whose branches the birds of the air will yet find a lodging. The very birds that would have eaten the tiny seed come and find lodgment in the tree which grows out of it; and people who despise and mock at you, now that you are a young beginner, will one of these days, if God blesses you, be glad to borrow comfort from your example and experience.

But one other thought on this point. Remember that *the completeness and development of the holy life will be seen above*. There is a city of which it is written, "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life." The tree of life is a heavenly plant, and so the fruit of the Christian is a thing of heaven; though not transplanted to the glory land, it is getting fit for its final abode. What is holiness but heaven on earth? What is living unto God but the essence of heaven? What are uprightness, integrity, Christ-likeness? Have not these even more to do with heaven than harps and palms and streets of purest gold? Holiness, purity, loveliness of character, — these make a heaven within a man's own bosom; and even if there were no place called heaven, that heart would have a heavenly happiness which is set free from sin and made like the Lord Jesus. See, then, dear brethren, what an important thing it is for us to be indeed righteous before God, for then the outcome of that righteousness shall be fruit which will be a tree of life to others, and a tree of life in heaven above, world without end. O blessed Spirit, make it so, and Thou shalt have all the praise!

"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."—Mark 7:34.

Have You Answered the Editor's Letter Yet?

A SOUL'S CONFLICT

(Studies in Psalm LXXIII)

X. THE ROCK OF AGES

By Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

(Report of Sermon preached on Sunday morning, 13th December, 1953, in Westminster Chapel, London)

Psalm lxxiii, 25 and 26

HERE in these words the Psalmist describes yet a further step in the process of his recovery from the spiritual sickness from which he had been suffering. We have followed him as he goes from step to step and stage to stage. He tells us that he was in a position in which his feet were almost gone, his steps had wellnigh slipped. He was on the verge of falling in a most terrible manner and of uttering things about God and His goodness and love which no man should ever utter. But he had been saved from that. He had been arrested, he had been held, and looking above and over it all, he found it was God Who had held him. He did not realise that at the time. He thought it was just that he could not allow himself to offend the generation of God's people. However, that held him; but still he was not happy, and he did not begin to understand the position until he went "into the sanctuary of God". It was there he was given to see clearly the truth about that problem which had been perplexing him — why is it that the ungodly seem so often to be having a good and remarkable time in this world, whereas God's people seem so frequently to be suffering and having difficulties and trials? There he saw it; God revealed it to him. He saw the truth about the ungodly, he saw the truth about God, he saw the truth about himself. Then, of course, having experienced all that, he looks at himself and he condemns himself. He repents in sackcloth and ashes; there is nothing too strong for him to say against himself. He sums it all up in this word: "I was as a beast before Thee, so stupid, so ignorant". He thus honestly faces himself at his worst, and admits that there is nothing to be said for him. He would have banished himself, if he had had the power, out of the sight of God. But thank God he did not have that power — no man has that power — and he went on to make a marvellous discovery in spite of all that had been true of him. "Nevertheless" he was continually in the presence of God. God had not left him, God had never left him.

That is the humbling thing in a way, that even when we wander from Him, God is still in a sense holding our right hand. He may let us go so far but never further than the reach of His love. He pulled him back, He held him and He restored him. It was God Who was working the whole time. He took him into the House of God to have this understanding, and there revealed everything to him. And so, thus understanding his past and his experience, he looks to the future — as we saw last time. He can face it now with real confidence. He says: "Thou hast holden me by my right hand; Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory". He is convinced that it is God Who has done all this for him, and He is going on. He cannot let him go and He will never let him go. God Who has begun the good work will complete and perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. So he has arrived at this wonderful position in which he sees clearly God's dealings with him and God's purpose with respect to him.

Having seen all that he now comes to this next step, this further statement. This, beyond any question, is the final position, the topmost level of all. Having seen all that he has seen there is only one thing left and it is quite inevitable. Here it is: there is nothing left in view of all this but just to give himself to worship and adoration of God. That is what he expresses in these two verses: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

I say that this is the next inevitable step, and I am very concerned about that point and want to emphasize it. Has there been anything more interesting as we have followed this man in his spiritual pilgrimage than to notice the connection between every step and statement? I am suggesting that here we have what we may well describe as the normal spiritual experience. We have been indicating as we have gone along that if we stopped at any one of these positions there is something wrong with us in a spiritual sense. To realise the truth at any one of these points inevitably leads to the next point and it is always a step higher. From the process of sinking lower and lower he had held himself by that first stand, and from that very moment he began to go up from step to step and rung to rung. In each case he did it quite inevitably, because if you understand any one of these situations it must lead you on to the next. And so, I say, that this man having realised all these things about God and God's gracious dealing with him and the marvellous doctrine of grace in its various manifestations, he just almost involuntarily and quite inevitably found himself worshipping God and adoring Him at His wonderful Throne of grace. This, I say, is the end of the process, and it is the uttermost and topmost level at which we can ever arrive. Indeed, in these two verses we have the GOAL OF SALVATION. This is what it is all about, what it is all for, and this man had arrived at it.

May I say something here in parenthesis. One often finds a tendency amongst Christian people to depreciate the Old Testament. It is not that they do not believe in it as the Word of God. They do, but there is a tendency on their part to contrast themselves with the saints of the Old Testament. It is the tendency to say: "We are in Christ, we have received the Holy Spirit, the Old Testament saints did not know of this and they are therefore inferior to us". Well, if you are tempted to think like that I have one simple question to put to you, and it is this: Can you honestly use the language that this man uses in these two verses? Have you arrived at a knowledge of God and an experience of God such as this man had? Can you say quite honestly: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". How prejudiced we are. These Old Testament saints were children of God as you and I are; indeed if you read these Psalms quite honestly you will

at times feel rather ashamed of yourself and occasionally begin to wonder whether they had gone further than you have ever gone. They were children of God even as we are. Let us be careful lest we press dispensational truth too far and make distinctions which end by being thoroughly unscriptural.

This man is able to speak like this about his relationship to God, and I do not hesitate to aver that the whole business of the New Testament Gospel and its salvation is simply to bring us to this. This is the test of Christian profession, this is the whole purpose of the Incarnation and the entire work of our Blessed Lord and Saviour. It is to enable us to speak like this, to use this Old Testament language. Therefore I would ask again my question: Can we speak like this? Is this our experience? Do we know God as this man knew Him? Whatever else we may have, whatever else we may be able to say, I say we must never be satisfied until we can come to this. This is the goal, this is the objective. To be satisfied at any point or any stage, however good, short of this is in a sense to deny the Gospel itself, for the great and grand end and object of the whole Gospel is to bring us, as I am going to show you, to this particular position.

I.

Let us then face this great statement: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." What does he mean? What is he saying? We can look at this magnificent, mighty, glorious statement in two main ways, or, if you like, from two standpoints. I am sure the first thing in his mind was a negative and that he was making a *negative statement*. He is saying that he has found as the result of his experience that there is nobody else anywhere who can help him, that there is *no other Saviour* anywhere else. He is asking, again, an urgent question: Who is there who can help me in heaven or earth but Thee? There is nobody else. When things have gone wrong, when I am really at the end of my tether, when I do not know where to go or where to turn I have found that there is nobody apart from Thee. When he needs comfort and solace and strength and assurance and something to hold on to, he has found that there is nothing, nowhere, there is no one apart from God. Now his negative is important for us, important for us all. Indeed I thank God for the negative because I find it very comforting. For I imagine that what this man is saying can be put in this form, that whatever his imperfections, whatever his failure, he was at any rate able to say this, that when he was away from God and disappointing God, and more or less turning his back upon God, he could find no satisfaction. There was an emptiness about it all; it could not satisfy him, it could not bless him, it could not strengthen him. This man affirms that in his experience when he was wrong with God he was wrong everywhere. At any rate he could say this, that if he was not able to make any positive statement about God, he could say there was nothing or anybody or anything else! Now that is a very comforting thought. Are we able to use the negative, I wonder? If we are afraid of the positive test how do we stand with this negative test? Can you say that you have seen through everything in this life and world? Have you yet come to see that everything that the world offers is a broken cistern? Have you really been enabled to see through the world and its way and all its supposed glory? Have you come

to the point where you can say: "Well, I know this much at any rate, that there is nothing else that can satisfy me; I have tried them, I have experimented with them. I have played with them and I have come to this conclusion, that apart from God, as Othello says, 'chaos is come again'."

This is a very important aspect of experience, and a very vital one. Anyone who has been a backslider knows exactly what I am saying. It is one of the ways of proving what I was saying last week about the backslider. The backslider is a man who, because of his relationship to God, can never really enjoy anything else. He may try, but he is miserable while it lasts. He has seen through it. This, therefore, is something by which we must always test ourselves. In this remarkable way and in this confession we have a very striking test of our Christian faith and belief. That is often, I say, the first step. Suddenly you find that everything else has become different — "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new". They do not seem to possess the charm and value they seemed to have. We just discover that when we are not in the right relationship to God the very foundations seem to have gone. We may travel to the ends of the earth and try to find satisfaction without God. But there is none. That is the first step.

II.

But obviously we do not stop there. This statement is also a very *positive one*. Let me emphasize this, and let me do so by subdividing this man's positive assertion. Positively, I think he is saying in the first place that he *now desires God Himself*, not only what God gives or what He does. Now that is a very important statement for this reason, that the whole essence of this man's problem, in a sense, had been just this, that he had been putting what God gives in the place of God Himself. That was his problem concerning the ungodly. They were having a good time, so why was he having such a bad time? Why had he been plagued all the day long, why had he seemed to have cleansed his heart in vain and to have washed his hands in innocency? What was his trouble as he thought those thoughts? It was that he was more interested in the things that God gives than in God Himself, and because he did not seem to be having the things he wanted he began to doubt God's love. But now he has come to the place in which he can say quite honestly that he desires God Himself as God and not what God gives us, and what God does.

Let me put this very strongly. The ultimate test of the Christian is that he can truly say that he desires God even more than he desires forgiveness. We all desire forgiveness, and it is right to desire forgiveness. Yes, but that is a very low state of Christian experience. The height of Christian experience is when a man says: "Yes, but beyond forgiveness what I desire is God, God Himself". We often desire power, and ability, and various other gifts. It is right in a sense to desire them: but if we ever put those things before God again we are proclaiming that we are very poor Christians. The Christian desires blessings of various types and prays to God for them, but in doing so we may sometimes in a sense be insulting God because we are telling Him that we are not interested in Him but in the fact that He is able to give us these blessings. We desire the blessings and we do not stop to enjoy the blessed Person Himself. This man had been through all that, and now he has come

to see that the greatest of all blessings is just to know God and to be in the presence of God.

The Bible is full of that kind of thing. Take that forty-second Psalm. There it is again in the first two verses — "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God". There it is perfectly. That man is crying out for this direct knowledge of God, this immediate experience of God. His soul "panteth", he is "thirsting" for Him, the living God. Not God as an idea, not God as a source and fount of blessing, but the living Person Himself. Do we know this? Do we hunger for Him and thirst for Him, are our souls panting after Him? This is a very profound matter, and the terrible thing is that it is possible to go through life praying day by day and yet never realising that the supreme thing is to come face to face with God, to worship Him in the Spirit and in a spiritual manner. Do you know that you are doing business and having dealing directly with the living God? Have we known His presence? Is He real to you? Or let me put it on a lower level . . . Are we longing for that, are we seeking that, are we without satisfaction until we have that? Is that the greatest desire of our hearts and our highest ambition beyond all other blessings and experiences — just to know that we are there before Him and that we know Him and are enjoying Him? That was what the Psalmist desires in the forty-second Psalm, that is what this Psalmist of ours in this seventy-third Psalm was actually enjoying. The apostle Paul says exactly the same thing. He puts it in his own language in the tenth verse of the third chapter of his letter to the Philippians. If you ask me, says Paul, what my greatest desire is, it is this: "That I may know Him". You notice his supreme ambition. Let me not be misunderstood as I put it plainly. His supreme ambition was not even to be a great soul winner. That was an ambition of his, and a right one. It was not to be a great preacher. No, beyond it all, including it all: "That I might know Him." Because, as the Apostle reminds us elsewhere, if you put the other things first you may find yourself, in a sense, as a preacher becoming even a cast-away. But when we put Paul's desire at the centre there is no danger. Paul had it — the face of the living Christ, the risen Lord — and yet you see that what he hungers for and pants after is this further, deeper, more intimate knowledge of Him, a personal knowledge, a personal revelation of the living Lord in a spiritual sense.

There is nothing higher than this. Look at the aged John writing his farewell letter to Christians. This is what he tells them in the first chapter of his first Epistle. He says my great desire is: "That your joy may be full". How is it to be full? "That you may have fellowship with us"; that you may share with us as partners the blessed experience we have got. And what is that? Well: "Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ". They have that fellowship. It does not just mean that you are engaged in God's work. It means that, of course, but that is the lowest level. The highest level is really to know God Himself. "This is life eternal that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent". Indeed we have the authority of our Lord Himself, not only in the statement I have just quoted but in another statement. When a man asked Him which was the greatest commandment of all He said: "Thou shalt love thy Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind . . . And the second is like unto it

Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". The first thing, the most important thing in life, is that we so know God that we love Him with the whole of our being. To be satisfied with anything short of that or anything less than that is to misunderstand the whole end and object and purpose of the Christian salvation. Do not stop at forgiveness. Do not stop at experiences. The end is to know God and nothing less. This Psalmist is able to say that he now desires God for His own sake, God for Himself, and not merely for what God gives and does.

Now let me put it in a second way. This man not only desires God Himself, *he desires nothing but God*. He is exclusive in his desire. He subdivides that, He says first that he desires nothing in heaven but God. What a statement. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? May I ask another question — and I think it is these simple questions that really tell us the whole truth about ourselves. What are you looking for and hoping for in heaven? Let me ask a question that perhaps should come before that. Do you ever look forward to being in heaven? That is not being morbid. I like the way in which Matthew Henry puts it: "We are never told in the Scriptures that we should look forward to death, but we are told very frequently that we should look forward to heaven." The man who looks forward to death simply wants to get out of life because of his troubles. That is not Christian, that is pagan. The Christian has a positive desire for heaven and therefore I ask: Do we look forward to being in heaven? But, in addition, what do we look forward to when we get to heaven? What is it we are desiring? Is it the rest of heaven? Is it to be free from trouble and tribulations? Is it the peace of heaven? Is it the joy of heaven? All those things are to be found there, thank God, but that is not the thing to look forward to in heaven. It is still the same thing it is the face of God — "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God". The Vision Splendid, the *Summum Bonum*, standing in the very presence of God. "To gaze and gaze on Thee." Do we long for that? Is that heaven to us? Is that the thing we see above everything else? It is the thing to covet and to long for.

The Apostle Paul puts it in his own language. What is to die? It is "to be with Christ." There is no need to add anything to that. That is why, I believe, we are told so little in a detailed sense about the life in heaven and in glory. People often ask the question: "Why are we not told more about it?" I think there are two answers to that. One is that because of our sinful state any description we might be given would be misunderstood by us. It is so glorious that we can neither understand nor grasp it. The second reason is more important, it is that it is often idle curiosity that desires to know more. I will tell you what heaven is. It is "to be with Christ" and if that does not satisfy you, well, then you do not know Christ at all. What is heaven to me? "Whom have I in heaven but Thee," says this man, I do not want anything else. Where Thou art is heaven. Just to look at Thee. "To be with Christ," it is all, it is everything, it is enough, it is more than enough. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?" How much do we know of this experience? We have had certain experiences and blessings, there are certain things we know already; but this is the test: Do you know Him, do you long for Him? Just to be with Him, to be conversing with Him. Do you pant after Him. Are you thirsting after the living God and for this intimacy with the Lord Jesus Christ? That is the real

Christian experience. How much time do we spend with Him, praying to Him? "Whom have I in heaven but Thee?"

In the same way, he goes on to say: There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". Again let us notice why the Psalmist says this. He says it because that was, as I have already indicated, the very essence of his previous trouble. It was because he was desiring certain other things that he had been in trouble. He says: Look at those others; there are no bands in their death. And he wanted those things: but he no longer wants them. He has seen through all that. No, no, "there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee" — God alone in heaven, God alone on earth. The Scripture, again, is full of this. Listen to the Lord Jesus Christ putting it in His way in the Gospel according to St. Luke, chapter 14, verse 26:—

"If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brother, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Do not worry about that word "hate"; it is simply strong word which is meant to say this, that any man who puts anybody or anything in his life before Christ is not a true disciple of His. To be a true disciple of Christ means that He comes first on earth before everybody, and before everything; Christ at the centre, Christ the Lord of my life, Christ on the throne of my being; that I love Him first before everyone and everything. "None other that I desire beside Thee." Does He come first in our lives? Even before our loved ones and our nearest and our dearest? Even before my work, before my success, before my business, before anything else while we are here in this world and on earth? He should be our supreme desire. "To me to live" is what? "Is Christ" says St. Paul. Christ Himself, to be walking through this world with Him, to be having fellowship with Him in this life. That is the test, and it was because he had come to that that the Apostle Paul is able to say the remarkable, amazing thing which he says in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, verses 11-13. He tells us there that he has learned: "In whatsoever state I am therewith to be content". Why? Other things no longer control him. It is Christ, it is Christ alone he wants. If I have Christ, he says, I have all and "I can do all things through Christ Which strengtheneth me". You are independent of circumstances and surroundings when living on Him and for Him, and other things pale into insignificance. Do we desire Him above everything else as we go through this earthly pilgrimage? The Psalmist had come to that.

But let me go on to the next thing. He tells us that he finds complete satisfaction in Him. The whole statement means that, but he puts it in particular. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion" — that is it, my portion — "for ever." His portion, his supply, his satisfaction, his everything. There is nothing that he can desire but God. And what is God? He is Sun and Shield, He gives grace and glory. There is no end to it: He finds that God satisfies him completely, his mind, his heart, his whole man. Do you find complete intellectual satisfaction in God and in His holy Work? Do you get all your philosophy here and feel that

you need nothing beyond it? God satisfies the man completely, the heart, the affection also. He fills everything:

"Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like thee His praise should sing"

God is all and in all. He is everything, my portion, my complete satisfaction. I desire nothing else, I want nothing in addition. Read the Psalms and you will find that theme everywhere. Read Psalm 103 and you will find that that is exactly what the Psalmist is saying there — God healing his diseases and sicknesses, casting his sins behind Him, giving him strength and power, everything. There is nothing men can need or desire but that God will give it. He is fully satisfied by this blessed glorious God.

That brings us to the last point, which is that the Psalmist rests confidently in God. He desires God for himself, for His own sake rather than for what He gives. He desires nothing but God. He finds complete satisfaction in God, and he rests and reposes confidently in God. Listen to him: "My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever". There are those who say that he is referring here to something he felt at the time as well as looking into the future. Probably they are right, because you cannot pass through a spiritual experience such as this man passed through without your physical body suffering. I believe this man's nerves were in a bad state, his physical heart may have been misbehaving itself. "My flesh and my heart faileth." He may have been in a bad state physically. But in any case, looking to the future he knows there is a day coming when his flesh and his heart will fail. He will become an old man, his faculties will fail, his strength will falter, he will not be able to feed himself, he will be lying helpless in bed, everything will seem to be slipping away. "It is all right," says this man. This is what is going to happen, but God, the same God, is the strength of my heart."

It is generally agreed that the word which he used which is translated "strength" is the word "rock". "But GOD IS THE ROCK of my heart and my portion for ever." I rather like that because it conjures up an image in our minds. "O, yes," says this man, "I know that I am in such a position that I can rest quietly and confidently in Him. I know that I can even say this, that though a day may come when I shall feel the foundations of life shaking beneath me, God will be a rock that will hold me. He cannot be moved, He cannot be shaken, He is the Rock of Ages, and wherever I am, and whatever is happening, and however my physical frame is behaving, and when even the things of earth are passing away God the Rock will sustain me and I shall never be moved, God is the Rock, the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

The Bible is never tired of saying this. Listen to what others say. Whatever terrible conditions may come to pass this is the comfort and consolation that they all give. Not only is God a Rock but "underneath are the Everlasting Arms". Yes, you are dropping into space, your foundations in life are gone, everything you built on is crashing down and you are going down into the abyss. No, no; "underneath" — and they are always there — "underneath are the everlasting arms". They are always holding you, you will never finally crash, you will be held when everything else is gone. But listen to Isaiah putting the same thing. He talks about that "foundation

stone"; that "sure, tried, tested foundation stone" that has been set, and what he says is this: "He that believeth shall never make haste". A better translation is this, as it is given in the New Testament: "He that believeth shall never be confounded." "He that believeth shall never be put to shame." Why? He is on the Rock, he has this support, he has this foundation, it cannot be moved, it is God Himself. And on this Rock, though my flesh and my heart may fail, I shall never be moved, I shall never be taken by surprise, I shall never be put to shame. God will see me right through.

Very well, let me try to sum it up in a hymn which is the final confession of the Christian:—

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' Blood and Righteousness,
I dare not trust my sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

"When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace,
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.

"His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the 'whelming flood'
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay."

That is it. Do you know it? Are you on the Rock? Do you know Him? Do not try to live on your family, do not live on your business, or on your own activity, do not live on your experiences, or anything else. They will all come to an end and the devil will suggest that even your highest experiences can be explained psychologically. Let us live on nothing, let us trust nothing but Him. He is the Rock of Ages, the Everlasting God:—

"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

—The Westminster Record

WE MUST DEPEND UPON THE HOLY SPIRIT

By Dr. A. W. Tozer

BECAUSE we are the kind of persons we are and because we live in a world such as we do, the shepherd of souls is often forced to work at what would appear to be cross purposes with himself.

For instance, he must encourage the timid and warn the self-confident; and these may at any given time be present in his congregation in almost equal numbers. His effort to encourage those who need encouragement may actually confirm presumptuous souls in their carelessness. Conversely, his much needed warnings and reproofs may drive timorous and doubting Christians to the borders of despair.

Another problem he faces is the presence in the normal Christian assembly of believers in every stage of development, from the newly converted who knows almost nothing about the Christian life to the wise and experienced Christian who seems to know almost everything.

Again, the Christian minister must have a word from God for the teen-aged, the middle-aged and the very aged. He must speak to the scholar as well as to the ignorant; he must bring the living Word to the cultured man and woman and to the vulgarian who reads nothing but the sports page and the comic strip. He must speak to the sad and to the happy, to the tender-minded and to the tough-minded, to those eager to live and to some who secretly wish they could die. And he must do this all in one sermon and in a period of time not exceeding forty-five minutes. Surely this requires a Daniel, and Daniels are as scarce in the United States in A.D. 1957 as in Babylon in 600 B.C.

To add to the pastor's burden is the knowledge that in each service there will likely be a few lost sons who should come home, some who never loved God at all and "some who lost the love they had." So he must call sinners to repentance, warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, instruct, reprove, rebuke, encourage, console and exhort all at the same time or at least on the same day.

This is the situation stated baldly, but it is not actually as difficult as it looks. I said that the preacher *appears* to be at cross purposes with himself; but it is in appearance only, for what seems to be confusion is but the seamy side of the tapestry. The artistic pattern is on the other side.

The man of God may labor on in complete trust and in full expectation of success, provided he is aware of a few basic truths. One is that however different people may be in externals, they are all alike fundamentally. That in us to which the Christian message is directed is the same in every human being.

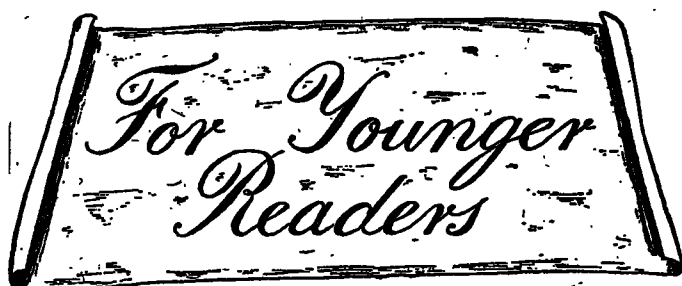
Before the cross of Jesus we are not old or young, educated or ignorant, cultured or uncouth, dull or brilliant; we are just people — human beings lost and ruined deep inside where incidental differences do not matter, where indeed they are not even known. As gold is gold whether it is mixed with the sand of the stream or wrought into an exquisite work of art by the hand of a Cellini, so the essential stuff of human nature is the same under whatever conditions it may be found. That about us which yields itself to social differentiation is not that for which Christ died. He did not, for example, die for doctors, farmers, authors, laborers, artists, engineers, professors, vagrants, presidents, musicians, lumbermen; He died for *lost humanity*, and any one can receive the benefits of His atonement, *but only as lost beings*. Color, race, social standings, occupation, cultural levels do not count, for they do not alter the basic human thing for which His blood was shed.

Because the inner lostness is the same in all human beings the work of God to reclaim them must be the same in all. And the Spirit broods over all, illuminating, revealing, convicting, enabling them to hear and see and understand.

It is one of the wonders and delights of preaching that the same message will often affect people differently, producing in one repentance, in another hope, in still others courage, humility or faith, according as the particular soul has need.

Without this mighty, skillful working of the Spirit, preaching would be futile; with it the ministry of the Word can be easy and delightful as well as marvelously effective.

—The Alliance Weekly



HOW DOES GOD DO IT?

By Helen Abel Wang

Elaine picked up her cutout dolls and put them away. Then she looked under the table to see if anything had fallen. Finding nothing, she hurried to the kitchen where Mother was ironing her weekly pile of shirts and children's clothes.

"Is there anything I can do to help?" asked Elaine. She was almost seven years old now, and was proud to be able to help whenever she could. Besides, Mother was always so busy working for the family that she really appreciated the many little things that Elaine could do.

"If you are very careful, you may water the plants in the window and on the porch," Mother replied with a smile.

Happily, Elaine found the jar used to water plants and then she climbed up on a chair to reach the sink. She started to turn on the water, then stopped. Turning to Mother, she said, "Should I use hot or cold water, Mother?"

Mother paused in her work and smiled. "What does God use when He waters the earth?" she asked.

Thinking carefully for a moment, Elaine laughed. "I guess He uses pretty cool water, doesn't He?" Filling her jar, she finished watering the plants and then went out to play.

The next day Elaine and her friend Linda were playing in the garden. Since it was a very hot day, they soon became too warm and sat down in the shade of a tree to rest. Linda's little brother ran around from the front of the house, and seeing the girls in the shade skipped over to join them. Linda didn't like Tommy tagging after her so she told him to go away. He answered, "I'm so hot, can't I stay in the shade for a little while? It's not your shade, anyway."

"Well, whose is it then?" snapped Linda. "This is Elaine's house!"

Mother, who had heard the talking through the kitchen window, came out of the house and sat down beside the children. "Who made the tree and the sun?" she asked.

"God, I suppose," answered Linda.

"Then," continued Mother, "what do you think God would do about your quarrel? Doesn't God give rain to everyone? Doesn't He make the sun to shine on all kinds of people, and isn't the beauty of His world for all to see?"

"Yes, I guess you're right," Linda and Elaine agreed.

"Well, if that's the way God does it, then that's the way we should do it, too. Let's all come into the house for cookies and lemonade. We can begin understanding how God does things by sharing the good things we have. Who could we ask to join our little party this afternoon?"

After the children had suggested some of their friends. Mother asked about the new little boy and girl who had just moved in across the street.

"We don't even know them. Besides, they don't look like the rest of us. Somebody said they were part Indian. We don't want to eat with them!" Linda said disgustedly.

"Let's ask ourselves that question again," said Mother. "How does God do it? How did Jesus do it? Do you remember how Jesus stayed with Zacchaeus who was a sinner and hated by the people? Also, do you remember how He visited those with diseases that He might catch? Just what did Jesus think was the way to treat others?"

Linda and Elaine felt ashamed, and didn't know what to say. Finally Elaine's mother remembered the Bible lesson that the girls had had the week before in Sunday school. "Does either of you know what the verse was you learned last week?" she questioned.

Linda's eyes brightened, for she was proud of being the one who knew the most Bible verses in her class. "It was, 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.'" she said.

"Now then," said Mother, "what are you going to do about the new children? What is God telling you that you must do?"

Elaine and Linda both thought a moment, then Elaine said, "I will go ask them to come, but it would be easier if you would come, too. Please, Mother, help us."

All of them, even Tommy, walked across the street and knocked at their new neighbor's door. A lady answered it, and was really happy that one of her neighbours had come to visit, for no one else had greeted her or her family.

To everyone's surprise and pleasure, the new children and their mother all came over for cookies and lemonade, and they had a happy time getting to know each other.

When Sparky, the puppy, begged for a cookie, Linda gave him one, and said, "That's what God would do, isn't it?"

—Sunday School Times

JARVIS STREET CHURCH CALENDAR

SUNDAY

- 9.45 Bible School for everybody, from grandfather to the baby.
- 11.00 Morning Service.
- 4.30 Afternoon Class.
- 5.55 Young People's Bible Fellowship Hour.
- 6.00 Prayer Service in Greenway Chapel.
- 7.00 Regular evening service.

TUESDAY

- 8.00 Departmental Conferences of the Bible School, followed by the teaching of the lesson at 8.45.

THURSDAY

- 2.30 Senior Dorcas Sewing Meeting.
- 5.30 Junior Dorcas Sewing Meeting.
- 8.00 Bible Lecture by Dr. H. C. Slade.

FRIDAY

- 7.00 and 8.15—Junior and Senior choir practices.
- 7.00 Friday Night Round-Up for boys and girls.

SATURDAY

- 8.00 Great Weekly Prayer Service in Greenway Hall.

Bible School Lesson Outline

Vol. 21 First Quarter Lesson 10 March 10, 1957

OLIVE L. CLARK, Ph.D. (Tor.)

CHRISTIAN FORGIVENESS

Lesson Text: Philemon.

Golden Text: "If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself."—Philemon 17.

Introduction:

During the Apostle Paul's first imprisonment in Rome he was encouraged by faithful co-labourers, and among these was a fugitive slave Onesimus, belonging to a wealthy Christian of Colosse named Philemon (Col. 4:9). Apparently, Onesimus, after robbing his master, fled to Rome, where he was saved through the instrumentality of the Apostle Paul. His growth in grace was such that he showed signs of becoming useful in the public ministry of the Word. Paul knew that he belonged to his master, and should return. But, would Philemon receive him graciously and forgive him? It was decided that the repentant Onesimus should return to Colosse in company with trusted Tychicus, who was making the journey to Asia Minor, carrying with him the letters to the churches at Colosse and Ephesus (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7-9). The Apostle gave Onesimus this letter of recommendation to his master, urging Philemon to restore the Christian slave to favour, and offering himself to repay the money which had been stolen.

The Epistle to Philemon, then, was written about 64 A.D. and was delivered at the same time as Colossians and Ephesians. The date is judged by the circumstances, especially by the fact that the same persons are mentioned as being with the Apostle (Compare Col. 4:10-14 with Philemon 23, 24). It is a letter of Christian courtesy, fellowship and love.

Outline:

- I. The Greeting: verses 1-3.
- II. The Thanksgiving: verses 4-7
- III. The Intercession: verses 8-21.
- IV. The Benediction: verses 22-25.

Exposition:

The Apostle Paul, the prisoner of the Lord, sent greetings to his wealthy friend Philemon in Colosse, in whose house the church gatherings were held. Apphia was doubtless his wife, and Archippus, the evangelist (Col. 4:17), may have been visiting in the home at the time.

Philemon was evidently one who used his treasure for the Lord's glory, recognizing that all his possessions belonged to his Master and were to be used in the furtherance of the Gospel. He exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his faith bore fruit in his love toward the Lord and toward all the saints (Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:3, 4; 1 John 3:23). The Apostle Paul continually prayed that the faith of Philemon might be communicated to others, so that it would be an effective testimony, and that those who beheld his sterling qualities would be compelled to acknowledge that his excellent character was due to what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for him and in him (v. 6; Matt. 5:16). The Apostle rejoiced at every remembrance of his beloved friend, whose very name meant "Friendly" (Phil. 1:3). The testimony of a fragrant life has great influence with men.

There are those who are always most anxious to assert their rights, but not so the humble St. Paul. In his official capacity as the Apostle to the Gentiles, and as the spiritual father of Philemon, he might have demanded that the slave be forgiven and restored, inasmuch as we are commanded to forgive others (Matt. 6:12-15); but he chose rather to make his appeal as a friend to a friend on the ground of love (2 Cor. 3:12; 1 Thess. 2:6). Also, being now aged and in prison (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:8), he might not make many more requests; this one should be granted.

It was true that Onesimus, whose name means "Profitable", had been anything but profitable to his master in the past, but by becoming a Christian and repenting, he was now profitable to the Apostle Paul, as well as to Philemon (1 Tim. 6:2). Receive him as though he were of my own flesh and blood, writes the Apostle. There is no tie so strong as that which binds together those who have been a mutual blessing to one another in the Lord.

Although not pressing his own claim, the Apostle courteously and generously recognized the just claim of Philemon over his fugitive slave. The laws of the land must be obeyed (Rom. 13:1; Tit. 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13, 14). The Apostle would like to have retained Onesimus, but the master must be left free to decide the future of his servant (Eph. 6:5-9).

No doubt Philemon had reckoned it a disaster when his slave had defrauded him and absconded. But the Apostle would remind his friend that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). The slave's departure and sojourn in Rome had brought about contact with the Apostle Paul and the Gospel. Without his comparatively short absence, no such complete and lasting reconciliation would have been possible (Gen. 45:5, 8). Therefore, he should be forgiven for the former escapade. Hitherto the pagan slave had been but an item of property for his wealthy owner, but as a Christian, he was no longer a mere slave, but was a brother in the Lord, bound to Philemon by fleshly ties, but also by spiritual ties. This should compensate the master for any material loss sustained in the past.

The phrase "more unto thee — in the flesh and in the Lord" has given rise to a suggestion that Onesimus may have been a natural blood brother to Philemon, as not infrequently in those days people were imprisoned for debts toward members of their own family.

The Apostle Paul's intercession on behalf of Onesimus, that he might be forgiven, provides an excellent illustration of the doctrine of substitution and also that of imputation, as the theologians call it (verses 17, 18). "Receive him as myself." All of Paul's merits he would transfer to the fugitive slave, while at the same time he was willing that all the slave's debt should be transferred to his own account. So did our Saviour assume all of our liabilities and pay in full all our debt (Isa. 53:4-6; Rom. 4:22-25; 5:1-11). He also is willing to place to our account the sum total of all His own perfect righteousness (Rom. 8:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21). On this just ground, forgiveness is possible for the sinner (Rom. 3:21-26). And how powerful and unceasing is our Saviour's intercession on behalf of the sinner who trusts in Him (Heb. 7:25)!

Philemon himself was greatly indebted to Paul, who had brought to him the message of salvation. How grateful we should be to those who declare to us the word of life (1 Cor. 9:11; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; Heb. 13:7, 17)!

The Apostle Paul tactfully wrote of his confidence that Philemon would give a favourable answer to this appeal (2 Cor. 7:16). Surely such a kindly, courteous request would not be denied.

Daily Bible Readings

March 4—	Pattern of Forgiveness	.....	Luke 23:33-43
March 5—	Standard of Forgiveness	.....	Col. 3:12-17
March 6—	Spirit of Forgiveness	.....	Matt. 18:21-35
March 7—	Practical Aspects	.....	Luke 6:27-38
March 8—	Proper Attitude	.....	Phil. 2:5-18
March 9—	Grieve not the Spirit	.....	Eph. 4:25-32
March 10—	Excellence of Unity	.....	Psalm 133

Suggested Hymns

There are lonely hearts to cherish.
 From every stormy wind that blows.
 Christ has for sin atonement made.
 I hear the Saviour say.
 Would you be free from the burden of sin?
 Jesus loves me.

WHY

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