

new covenant Voice

*There are no limits
to love, it is
immeasurable: it
has no boundaries,
it cannot be
encompassed,
neither can it be
comprehended by
the natural man.*

G.W.North

But ye are come unto mount
Sion, and unto the city of the
living God, the heavenly
Jerusalem, and to an
innumerable company of angels
to the general assembly and
church of the firstborn, which are
written in heaven, and to GOD
the Judge of all, and to the
spirits of just men made perfect
and to JESUS the mediator of the
new covenant, and to the blood
of sprinkling, that speaketh
better things than that of Abel
See that ye refuse not him that
speaketh

HEBREWS 12:22-25

THE POWER OF LOVE

GEORGE W. NORTH

In the Colossian letter, chapter three, verse two, we read, 'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for you are dead'. Trust Paul to say something contradictory to most people's ideas. He often seems to say something calculated to cut through all the exalted ideas held by so many people. 'We are not dead', say some, 'we are alive'. How true. Paul says 'you are dead', and he is telling God's children the truth. Do you feel dead? 'Not I', you may say, and add, 'you are contradicting all that has been preached to me'. Well, there it is; it is written. On Paul's authority we are dead; now then, according to his further instructions, we are able to set our affections. By temporarily passing over the first verse, which starts off with 'If', we have been more able to emphasize THIS important point - we are dead. 'Set your affections on things above'. No-one is able to do this if what Paul introduces by that 'if' is not so operative in the life that he can justifiably omit it. To take a verse like 'Set your affections ...' and not relate it to 'If you be risen with Christ ...' is to court failure. Likewise also to fail to relate this to, 'ye are dead ...' is to court disaster. Paul is saying, 'If you be risen with Christ, you are dead', which seems to be a contradiction, and it IS a contradiction to those who do not know the laws of God and of life eternal.

Jesus Christ lived on this earth as a dead man. It was the only condition in which he could live in this world. He was completely dead to sin, to the world, to the flesh, to the devil, to insults, to compliments, to condemnation, to temptation, to self - to everyone and everything but God and His will. His affections were set on things above, not on things on the earth; these only had meaning to Him as they were related to His Father's will for Him and the commission He held. 'Therefore, set YOUR affections; set them on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and YOUR life is hid WITH Christ in God. Beloved, it all has to do with the affections. But has it not to do with sin also? No, you are dead to sin, that is what this death is all about. Being alive you now have to SET your affections and it is quite useless you and I talking about love if we do not talk about the affections. Love, to be what it is, must be affectionate, if not it is not love. Love is not a cold, carnal dummy of a thing; it is warm, free, expressive, demonstrative.

TENDER

What made the Lord Jesus persist as He did with Peter on the lake shore? Why did He make him tell Him that he loved Him? Was it because He wanted him to be an apostle? Yes. Was it because He wanted the man to give up fishing? Yes. Was it because He wanted him to be a good shepherd, or to earn reward, or wear a crown, or judge one of the tribes of Israel, or ..., or ...? Yes, yes, yes, yes, but not primarily. We could answer 'yes' to all these questions, for it would be true, and still miss the most vital reason. The Lord persisted with Peter because He loved him, and wanted Peter's love and

affections too. Love to the Lord Jesus must be affectionate love. Now if you love somebody affectionately, you love them tenderly. Daniel records in his book that he was brought into tender love with the man who had charge of the king's eunuchs. The love between them was tender. At this point, dismiss any suggestion of mixed-up sinful, fleshly desires and demonstrations of prostituted love: Daniel's love was as pure as it was tender. This love and affection of which Paul speaks is the nature of God's own love to him from a human heart. The fact that these affections are not set on things of the earth straight away rules out all perverted, lustful forms and expressions of love and affection. In Christ, God is concerned with human beings, not with male or female; this is glorious to understand. Earlier in this epistle, Paul speaks of Christ being the Son of God's Love. You and I must love the Lord Jesus affectionately, for unless the affections are involved, so that we respond with tenderness to Christ's love, we do not love Him with the love the Lord desires from us. You may be a good worker, and very good at shouting out texts in the high street, and 'Hallelujahs' in the church, and doing all kinds of things considered to be great virtues in churches, but none of them will count much in heaven unless Jesus can feel your love.

When God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) comes in and dwells in a person, whoever it may be, He turns toughness to tenderness, harshness to gentleness, bitterness to sweetness, and coldness to warm affection. The power of affection is one of the greatest powers a man may have. Lack of AFFECTIONATE love ruins marriages and sometimes breaks them up (or is it down?). Except love be expressed, there is no love; it cannot exist. If necessary, love must be broken, it must express itself. A young lady was in deep distress because the man she loved was a long, long way away, and she felt that before he had left she had done something which had wronged him. She was so upset because she had caused him sorrow, but did not know what to do, or how to contact him. 'Whatever will he be thinking of me?'. 'Whatever will happen now?' 'How can I tell him?' Far away, he picked up the phone, dialled a number, waiting, hoping for her voice to come through, and the first words he said were, 'I love you darling'. 'Oh!' It burst out of her - a great sigh of relief! 'I've been wanting to hear that.' Everything changed in her because his love had not changed for her, nor could it cease to express itself. The Lord longs for us to understand this about Him, and He longs for it to be the same in us. It is so simple yet so profound, and let us be sure that what works in God, works in man, and what works in heaven, works on earth.

QUICKENING

'If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, NOT on things on

the earth. For you are dead, and YOUR LIFE IS **HID** with Christ', and He and it are in God. This hidden life is locked in His heart and at first unknown by man; it must be discovered. Salvation is nothing other than the continuous appropriation of the life we are constantly discovering and it must be appropriated. We must dismiss from the forefront of our minds the thought of believing and being safe for ever. Though at first this may have attracted us (such thinking has its place, and is very real) no soul should believe that just to stay on that level of thinking is to stick; that is not the sum total of Biblical believing. Being born of God, everything in man is quickened, in order so that he shall go on to discover what and wherein life really is.

It does not consist in just going along to a place and sitting in a seat on Sundays. It is something that fills a man, uplifting his whole being, thrilling his soul and enlarging his vision, bringing with it an insatiable appetite to know more and more of Christ. Has God really gotten hold of you like this? Christ who sitteth on the right hand of God begins in you by **SETTING** all your desires for Him and everything in Him. Having done this, He expects you to set your affection there in that heavenly realm. Quite obviously when Paul says 'you are dead' he is not referring to physical death. He is referring to a time in your life when the powers that have been driving you, making you be what you are and do the things you do, have been brought to a sudden, definite end. All those inner powers of you - desires, drive, will, tastes, loves, hates, self-will and the like, are being driven by a greater power; it is that power which must be brought to an end. A sudden death. The Gospels record clearly that Jesus Christ only hung on the cross for as long as it took to shed His blood and bear away our sin; this done, quite deliberately and totally unexpectedly, He suddenly died. God's provision of death is for every man who will come to it - sudden and total spiritual death, and sudden and total spiritual life. Until a man or a woman is prepared to come to this death ... God cannot do what He wants to do and is most needed in that person. Let no man faint or fear, the Spirit of God will bring all 'serious' persons to it.

REPENTING

Lower down the chapter we read these words; 'Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye'. Can you remember how Christ forgave you? Do you remember the time when at last you came to Christ wholly, not artificially, or partially, but without reserve? That is the only way you can come to Christ. If your response to this question is, 'What do you mean by that?' then you have not come. God had the Book written so that we could discover that there IS only one way to come to Him for eternal life. Before people could come to Christ at the beginning when He was on the earth, God made them first go to John Baptist. God did not allow Jesus to appear in public but kept Him back, tucked away in a Nazarene carpenter's shop, until they had been to John. God insisted that they should hear the word of God through John Baptist before they heard it from Christ: the word John preached was, 'Repent'. God sent a man to minister to the people about the baptism of repentance; he saturated the land with it and to those who repented he administered baptism in water. People never really got through to the true Christ then, nor do they get to Him now

if they will not face up to, and totally repent of **BEING THEIR OWN SELF** - living their own life, and doing their own sins, going their own way.

Such is the subtlety of the human heart, and so great is the blindness of our eyes, that even when reading the Bible, the devil and our own sin can deceive us. Paul says, though not in these words (I am colloquialising it), 'I read the Bible, I kept the law, but I was blinded by it. Sin took advantage of me by the law and by it deceived me'. We read in the Bible that Jesus spake the famous words, 'Come unto Me' and that He spake them after John had been put into prison. Men could not go to John there, his ministry had ended. When the Baptist first came to Jordan, and to his ministry, the nation of the Jews did not even know that Jesus existed. They could not go to Him - He was just Jesus of Nazareth, unknown and unsought after then. But as soon as He came, via John's baptism, to the nation, John began to decrease. His message remained though, and Jesus took it up and built upon it. Now that should speak volumes to every heart.

Repentance is a heart exercise; it does not ask, 'will someone tell me what to do', the heart knows what to do. Repentance is a personal dealing with God, a favour granted us by His great grace, a concern to have dealings with Him about personal sin. It is an act in reality by my essential being. It is an indication of soul-awakening, the first proof of awareness; it is my own self-condemnation of sin. At that time repentance matters more to a man than anything else in the world. It does to God also. At that time repentance is the greatest service God can render to a man, it is God's involvement with him about himself, and his eternal well-being. At that time no man thinks he can get away with it by just saying, 'Thank you for telling me this. I'm sorry. Yes, I repent' No, beloved, no! Soul salvation does not rest in words, even Bible words. Repentance is heart exercise about personal sin, the acceptance of personal responsibility; it is the involvement of the whole personality with God about sin, crying out that it should end in your life, and all the past forgiven. Repentance will be to any man the most serious event in life to date.

INVOLVED

Some young people are so involved about the career they are going to carve out for themselves. They sweat through 'O' levels and 'A' levels, they leave home, they go to university, they work so hard day and night. Everything else has to go, the desire for education and to obtain a degree in something takes precedence over all. Sadly enough, so many discover that in the end all is for nought, they cannot get even the most humble of jobs. They have been SO involved - utterly, to the exclusion of all else almost. They would not do this, they would not do that, others were doing these things, but not they, they were utterly dedicated. If asked, 'What are you doing?' 'Studying, swotting', they will answer. They stay up late, drink endless cups of coffee, fighting sleep; they sacrifice everything in order to attain to something they may never have, and to get somewhere they may never reach. Involvement! But not about their sin. People who say they want eternal life do not want to be serious or to get involved about that. Beloved, the miracle God did at Calvary involved us all. Jesus, for your sake, went to the cross that He SHOULD involve you in it and went to the cross AS you. Let

no-one stand aside from it, for no man can absolve himself from it; the cross was because of you and for you.

Cynical minds may say, 'Well if God involved me, He involved me, but what about it? I never asked Him to do so. He did it without me knowing anything about it, how then can I be held responsible for that? How can I be involved in, or held responsible for something done without my knowledge and against my will?' Thus man seeks to justify himself and worsen his sin by personal rejection of God. But that cannot be. Oh no. Coldness and hardness of heart will not do. Hot red blood was shed at the cross, and everyone has got to get involved in it to the last drop of hot red blood in their body, and every informed thought of the mind. Are we so blind that we cannot even see that we dare not take up the position, 'Well, God did it, that was up to Him', and think that we can get away with it scot-free. That is not possible, this is God's doing. Whether we like it or not, God involved us all at the cross. So great is the involvement that if we do not involve ourselves with the man who hung on the cross, we involve ourselves with those who said, 'Away with Him. Crucify Him'. If a man stay with them he will go to hell.

REAL

What happened to Jesus on the cross was an act of God: God did it. It was also an act of man: man did it. The particular men involved were forgiven; they did not know what they were doing, and God did not hold them responsible for it. It was not until after Christ rose from the dead that men were held responsible for crucifying Him. That resurrection is the proof that Jesus is the Son of God, and every man who knows of it is held responsible by God on account of it. God did not ask anyone if He should do it, and no-one asked Him to do it. Whether a man thinks it was right or wrong for God to do so has nothing to do with it. Man did not make the world or invent and create humanity; God did it. He did not say, 'by your leave'; man is presented with a 'fait accompli' and must make his choice; what he is going to do and what he is not going to do in no way affects what God has already done. Personal choice certainly affects what God does with a man; but thankfully, except indirectly, it cannot affect any other. It is time every man heard and understood this.

The Lord in His grace wants us all to come out of the philosophies and fancies of this world and enter into reality. This whole world is a fantasy, every thoughtful person knows it is. Men go to work and say, 'I'm getting a salary of (say) ten or twenty thousand pounds a year', and he knows when he says it that he is not. In one way or another perhaps a third, or even more of it, will be taken from him in taxes etc. The whole population lives in sheer fantasy: the world is full of it. Men say, 'We have the good life', yet they know that it may not be long before they are called up to join the armed services and possibly be killed or maimed. People will not face reality. They think and say, 'This is the real world', meaning this is what is really happening. It is not, it is fantasy. Reality is God, Him, His heaven, His salvation. Your body is a fantasy. Your appetites are fantasies. There is nothing substantial about them, they are all going to pass away; fantasies always do. You may think, 'If I do not eat, I shall die'. Never. That is not the truth. Oh, Lord, open everybody's eyes. Beloved, you are dead, slain by God. That is the reality. This does not mean you have gone out of existence altogether. What it does

mean is:

1. you have gone out of existence as an 'old man'.
2. you are no longer existing in sin.
3. you still exist bodily IN this world, but are no longer OF it.

Do you believe that? Also, do you remember how God forgave you for Christ's sake - because Christ loved you, died for you, redeemed you, rose for you, took your punishment and your sin? If you do, then you love others. That is reality. Everyone must believe rightly for a start, but no-one must rest there beloved, we must do right also.

PROFOUND

When God forgave me, He forgave me in perfect justice for His Son's sake, and not just for the sake of it either. He forgave me with affection and love, and I was in rest, without one nagging doubt. Whatever you read of in the Bible, whether it be about grace or forgiveness - or anything God does for men; it is far greater than men ever imagined it could be. Always. Some time ago someone presented me with a card. In one of the corners there was a little sketch, and the reading on the card was this, 'All of God is always in all He does'. How true. God is overwhelmingly great. Truth is so immensely profound that we human beings just cannot receive or retain it all in our minds, nor can we take it in all at once. To any man who receives Him, God comes with all He has and is; all was there when He forgave you. In that instant, if only we had known it, the vastness of God was there, and had we been aware of it, we could have had all. We did not, though, but He did not penalize us for that reason, He gave us all we could take at that time, a foretaste of all that which was to come. He did not deal with us after our sins or reward us according to our iniquity, nor made us feel like some sort of inferior being. He gave us as much as we could take; we are so tiny.

Paul proceeds, 'Above all these things, put on love.' The words 'put on' are not in the original. 'Above all these things love!' Paul is standing on the housetops shouting out, 'Above all these things, love. Love is the bond of perfectness'. Love is a bond? Yes, it is and everyone is held in it and by it. In former years love was vitiated; it was twisted, filthy, vile, all wrong, and men were bound by it all to sinful things because they loved them, and could not let them go. Some hear the gospel and try to let them go, and separate themselves from them, but found it impossible, they could not break the bond of love. The thrill of sinning comes from love of it - love of sin. Men love their own way and do not care.

'Oh that the grace of God - all powerful, should sweep over us, warming all hearts, getting to the root of our troubles - love of sinning - and oust it.' Everything started in love, it is the great power of God and it continues in it to this day, with this difference, it is now the awful, twisted, enslaving power of sin. Men we do not recognize it for what it is. Love has been holding men all along; love of sinning, love of self, love of the ways of the world, though they know its corrupting power, some do not recognize it for what it is, others refuse to.

According to artists, many who were crucified in Christ's day were bound to the cross; possibly the thieves on

either side of Christ were only bound to the cross. But such was the hatred of men, and the vicious power of political and religious authority against Christ, that they nailed Him to the cross. Not everybody that hung on a cross was crowned with thorns. 'Was it the nails, oh Saviour, that bore Thee to the tree, Nay, 'twas Thy everlasting love, thy love for me, for me. Oh make me understand it, help me to take it in. What it meant to Thee, the Holy One, to bear away my sin'. Here is the source of my salvation. It lies in God's love, His determination, His never-failing purpose and strength to tell us the truth.

CHOOSE YOUR MASTER

The incident of a woman who came to see me many years ago comes to mind. This lady came into the room made-up like a film star. Perhaps she thought it made her look lovely - what a pity, it was entirely unnatural, she was living in fantasy land. She began to talk to me and I soon learned that she was the wife of a high-ranking army officer. He had served abroad - now they were home and living not so very far away from where I was living. The lady wanted to be a Christian, she said, that was why she had come to see me. I learned that she had nerve trouble, and as I listened I discovered she had many other kinds of trouble also. After a while, I said to her, 'Do you really want what you've been listening to today? (She had been in the previous meeting). 'Yes, I do', she answered. 'Do you realize that if you truly want to be all that God wants you to be, you will very probably have to leave the set you are moving in?' She listened unmoving while I explained that to do so was not a condition for getting what she said she wanted, but as a result of receiving it. My concern was to prepare her mind, for she needed to know that if she wanted to have those things she was in, and stayed in them, she could not have what God was offering. It's rather like someone saying, 'Yes, I want to be able to swim, I'd love to be able to float on the water, but would it be wrong to keep this ton weight hanging on me?' She said, 'Would I have to give up my bridge parties, leave my circle of friends? Will I have to do this, will I have to do that, will I have to do the other?' 'Yes', I said, 'I think it will involve that'. Like the rich young ruler, who left Jesus when he heard that his request for eternal life would mean the cross, she went away, still enslaved, bound by love of the world.

Everyone of us in this world is enslaved in some form of bondage - either beloved or hated. To gain the loved bondage to the beloved Person, all other bondage must be broken. Choose your master. Choose Him, and choose now - He is going to be your Master. He must be your Lord.

To read the New Testament is to discover that once through the Gospels, the writers speak of 'the Lord', 'Christ Jesus'. Very rarely is He referred to as Jesus, as in the Gospels. Unwarrantable over-familiarity is being bred and encouraged in these days, it is growing fast, as unchecked in churches as it is in the world. It is a lamentable fact that school children now call their teachers by their Christian names. Respect of person and of position is departing from the nation, everything is on the slide, and it seems the churches have gone with it. There is no respect, everybody must be brought down. No-one is regarded as being better than anyone else any more, not even God. Beware of it. Blessed is the man who from earliest days sees the Lordship of Christ.

With Isaiah see the Lord, and the sight will change your language; in worship, in praying, in speaking, in preaching, in everything. Someone, an older gentleman, once said in tones of awe and sanctity, evidently worshipping in heart, 'The prophets of the Old Testament had a lofty view of God'. This has nothing to do with whether a person is a 'square', or old-fashioned, or belongs to a different generation. At new birth all men entered into eternal truth. In heaven, everyone is going to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, nobody is going to call the Lord of Glory, 'Jesus'.

HID WITH CHRIST

God forgive us that the churches have allowed themselves to be brought down from this glorious realm of respect and wonder and reverence, and dragged into this world of vulgarity and disrespect and irreverence. Is it not said that familiarity breeds contempt? It is not to say that we should never use the name Jesus, but that we should not bring Him down to the level of 'A Tom, a Dick or a Harry'. The Lord wants us to see what we are and where we are - 'OUR life is hid with Christ in God'. It is not on this earth. We exist for a while on this earth, but 'Our life is hid with Christ (not Jesus, note) in God. When Christ our Life (note, not Jesus our Life) shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.' If these and other things perhaps worse than this are in your life, 'mortify therefore your members which are on the earth'. Our members are upon the earth because we are, but the real me is in heaven. I have members here, that is all, but I (the essential me) am there. Jesus, when on the earth and in the world said of Himself that He was 'the Son of Man which is in heaven', so we, in order and measure, are both on the earth and in heaven. 'I and My Father are one', He says, that is how He lived, and that is how we who are hid in Him live also.

Paul once wrote that the life he was living in the flesh on earth at that time was the actual life of the Son of God - that it was actually Christ who was living inside his body, that by his own faith Christ was now presently living in him. He was not trying to copy Christ, he had no need to try and copy Him. Christ was IN him living HIS life there, making His life Paul's life, living it out through love. This is why he was so careful with his tongue, he recognized Lordship, his life manifested it. This is that life Paul was talking of when he wrote 'the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord'. God does not give over the eternal life Jesus Christ lived on earth to people as distinct, or separate from Jesus Christ. Eternal life for human beings does not exist apart from Jesus Christ; except men have Jesus Christ they cannot have eternal life. HE must come into a man and live His own life in him.

Christ will not give His life to any person so that by his own faith THAT person should live his life for HIM, that is by taking Him as an example and by faith copy it. He Himself must come in and take over that person and live His own life by His own faith in that person. What Paul was really saying was, 'It is Christ living my life for me'. Amazing, isn't it? But he meant just that when he said, 'The life I now live (in the flesh) I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me'. Christ gave HIMSELF to the Father for me, the Father delivered Him up for us ALL - HE Himself gave HIMSELF for me and to ME. No-one can live another person's life for him; Jesus Christ does not attempt to

persuade anyone to do that, but to let HIM do that. Every person must understand that the Lord must be received in and united with him to be his Lord. He must live His own life His own way, He must be Lord in us and over us. He will be there in secret, hidden within the person who receives Him, and O what a transformation will begin in him then; Christ's life will appear only where He is Lord. At that same time - while that person's body is still living here on earth, his life is hid with Christ in God.

IN THE BODY

With this in mind, Paul now addresses himself to the body, referring to it as a collation of members, associating each one with the kind of sin in which that member may be or may have been associated, or actually employed. 'Mortify therefore your members which are on earth', he says, and then proceeds to name these in connection with various sins. Some of the sins are sins of the body, some are sins of the mind, others are sins of the spirit - all of them are of the flesh, but whichever of them it may be, all must be brought to the death Christ died, and kept there. He died that death precisely for this reason. He did not die for Himself, as of His own need, but for us.

There is no talk of arms, legs, feet, or any other particular member of a person's body, but of the capabilities of every person's body. Voluntary or involuntary activities of bodily members must and do come under the control of the soul within that body. That is why He must live in it, forming a new soul, mortifying its former activities, replacing them with His own. We must, therefore, with Him mortify them as to their activities through our bodily members: 'fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: in the which you also walked some time, when you lived in them. But now you also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.' Is that the world where we are living, or do we live in a fantasy world, calling it reality? There is a verse in the Bible which says that, 'God made men upright, but he has sought out many inventions.' Sin was an invention of the devil, but human personality was invented by God, and at the cross He has dealt with that and with the devil, and the sins of which it is capable.

'As the chosen ones of God, holy and beloved, we are to put on ...' What a way to be thought of by God. 'Holy ones'. Does He feel that about you? Do you feel that about the people you meet? Are they your holy ones? Young people, if you are not yet married, do not marry anyone who is not your holy one. Love sets people aside in holiness. If you have only learned about love from magazines or television screens, you do not know love. Some might say, 'Well I didn't know all this when I got married'. Be at rest, God closes His eyes to the period of ignorance. But if you go on reading this Book, you'll soon have your vision corrected. Holy and beloved one - this is what you are to do - put on bowels of

mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance (again Paul uses human physical parts, mingling them with the spiritual to portray spiritual things). Is this a list of YOUR virtues, or is it just a list of virtues? Are we to smile at the Book and be cynical in our approach? Or can God trust us to be genuine with Him and each other, forgiving one another as we ought? And what forgiveness! 'If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you ...' The standard for forgiveness is Christ's and no-one else's, only by this can we tell that Christ is within: if so, what forgiveness - above all these things ... love. Above everything else, love with the love of God, and because it IS above all these things a man is to act like Christ, and be all God wants. How great is this love, it is the bond of perfectness. 'And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you are called in one body and be thankful.' God's love binding us together, God's peace ruling us, thankfulness throbbing among us like the beating of another heart. This is the vision of God, and to this we are called in one body. God has called us all to this, and only God knows how thankful a man is.

COMPLETE

Young or old, male or female, God can do it for us if we are willing, and prove it so. Beyond willingness, we must desire it. Do not think that God drops a pure white mantle over everything, saying, 'There you are; you are filthy underneath, but I only look at this white robe I have put on you, it is all I am going to see because it is all I want to see.' God does not practice self-deception and neither must we. He makes no exceptions, no 'allowances', no excuses, but with all His understanding and compassion, He will not manufacture one excuse for us. Would you not think it absolutely terrible if a man, having a dreadful disease, went to a doctor recommended to him by his friends, who assured him he would certainly be cured, and was met with the following kind of treatment? 'How did it happen?' 'I do not know.' 'Oh well, I will excuse you.' 'I have not come to you to be excused, I want to be cured.' 'Oh no, I will not cure you, I will cover everything up: there you are, that should satisfy you, I'm satisfied. Anyway, it's all I can do for you. You'll be alright, just continue as you are'.

So twisted and perverted in our minds are we, that we think God promotes lies and actually practices deception in the name of love, in order to maintain a facade called Grace. But this is not so, God has provided total cure, and here it is, chapter two, verse nine, 'You are complete'. In Him the cure is perfect, we are made whole. Let every man say, 'I am completely known, I am perfectly understood, I am totally provided for, I am made wholly a new creation'. You, I, all God's children together, are complete in Him. This is God's vision of you and provision for you; the ideal man which He was moved in love to create for human beings, is complete. Let that word 'complete' go right down deep into your heart. He is the head of all principality and power, there is no-one greater than He; nothing can hold you, not even the power of perverted love that is binding you. If you come to Him on His terms, you can be free in a moment.

FROM JEHU TO JESUS

DICK HUSSEY

I have prepared this article after its original writing, considering it necessary to publish it in this issue. No doubt the writer would have liked to have spent more time on the material, but I feel in my heart it will be a blessing to you in its present form - Ed.

Have you noticed how many of the great Bible heroes - particularly in the Old Testament - have names starting with the letter 'J'? Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, Jephtha, Jonathan, and so many others. This is to do with the original Hebrew language, no doubt, but one likes to think of them, in one way or another, as living projections from the great JEHOVAH. Incidentally, we shouldn't be reluctant to use this name for our God except when speaking to non-Christians, for the obvious connection with the Jehovah's Witnesses that can be so easily construed. Otherwise, it is so rich and meaningful. Fewbury tells us, 'It is a combination in marvellous perfection of the three periods of existence in one word - the future, the present and the past.'

Our thread starts with JEHU (Jehovah is He), the only king of Israel, after the division of the kingdom, of whom any good is said. He did not take heed to walk in the law, true enough, but those words to him from his God at the end of his days, 'Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in Mine eyes and hast done ... ACCORDING TO ALL THAT WAS IN MINE HEART' (II Kings 10:30), are surely a wonderful crown of glory we might all do well to seek.

In his youth he was but an army captain, albeit bold and fiery, but streaming from Elijah on his great encounter with God on the top of Mount Horeb, via Elisha, via one of the children of the prophets, came that box of oil poured upon him at Ramoth Gilead that was to transform him instantly into a mighty king and a titan in battle. The way he wiped out the house of Ahab, that fiendish witch Jezebel and the Baal temple with all its priests, makes a remarkable story.

Of course we must see with New Testament eyes that warrior spirit that is not concerned with flesh and blood, but mortifies the deeds of the flesh (or 'makes them die' as the Spanish version has it) by the Spirit, that we may truly live (Colossians 3:5 and Romans 8:13) - a spirit that stirs us to fight the good fight of faith and stand firm in the hour of conflict.

After winning his first battle, Jehu comes across JEHONADAB, not that cunning fox that centuries before had given such malicious advice to Amnon, David's firstborn, but one of a very different spirit - the son of Rechab. After greeting him, Jehu puts the very pointed question, 'Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?', to which Jehonadab replies promptly and concisely, 'It is'. There follows a hearty joining of hands of two worthies that are truly united in purpose to ride together on the royal chariot of battle and triumph with all the significance that goes with it.

We now leave Jehu to take up Jehonadab, the man of the right heart, loyal and true. How one rejoices in one's spirit every time one meets men and women of that selfsame princely

lineage - a right heart, a clean heart, a true heart, born from the seed of the incorruptible Word and from the blood seed flowing from the Blessed Crucified.

At the latter stage of his life, Jehonadab gathers all his family in the broader sense, and tells them they are not to drink wine, nor build houses or plant vineyards, but they are to live in tents, that they may live for many days. The word is faithfully obeyed and passed on from generation to generation - in figure, the faithful and true heart - spiritually, not genetically - passed on and reproduced.

Several centuries later, JEREMIAH, in the midst of the most abysmal decline and decay of God's people, is commanded by the Lord to gather the Rechabites, as Jehonadab's descendants were known, into an inner chamber of the house of God and to give them wine to drink. The awe-inspiring figure of the great prophet, the very special circumstances and the sacred setting of the temple, could have well moved most others in such a case to stretch a point and yield by drinking on 'just this occasion' - but not so these Rechabites - to break loyalty with their great venerable father Jehonadab was quite unthinkable! More than the issue of whether or not to drink wine - we must remember that our Lord Himself did drink on occasions - there lies the principle of true, unbreakable loyalty at that level of commitment on which we are bound to our great Eternal Father, regardless of what others may think or do in similar circumstances. All this latter part is narrated in Jeremiah 35, with the chapter ending ... 'Jehonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before ME for ever'.

All too often phrases like this - 'to stand before the Lord', or 'the presence of the Lord', and the like, are repeated far too lightly, and, one fears, with little real understanding of the precious and sacred depths implied. To find men and women who really know the way into the Holiest of All, where they soak their being in the fragrance of real 'communion' with the God of their life, and know in their depths those ineffable gushings of love divine, is truly a rare thing nowadays, perhaps more than ever. It is that inner life with, and in, God that alone can qualify, and enables us to stand truly before Him in the dignity of our full manhood in Christ.

And so, bear with the addition that just as is so often said - rightly or wrongly - that all roads lead to Rome, in God's great book one can say - quite rightly - that all great truths lead us to JESUS, Who is the great all-embracing truth, personified to uttermost perfection.

Be it the warrior spirit, the right and pure heart, the life that lives and walks truly with God and in God, or whatever other facet or virtue, it is all found in richest fulness in our precious LORD JESUS - and it is passed on in living reproduction by new birth, by His Word, His Spirit and His blood, that we too might 'reign in life' by One, Jesus Christ.

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R = ROCK

In the Old Testament Jehovah is often called 'rock' (eg Psalms 18:1f & v46; 19:14; 31:2f; 62:2; Is. 17:10; 26:4 where Jah Jehovah is an 'Everlasting Rock'. The RV margin gives 'a rock of ages' Is. 30:29; 44:8; Hab 1:12). Sometimes it is obscured in AV where it is rendered 'strength' or 'refuge'.

The title (Heb: Zor=rock), says one commentator, 'designates Jehovah by a forcible and expressive figure as the unchanging support or refuge for his servants and is used with evident appropriateness where the thought is of God's unvarying attitude towards His people'. The figure is no doubt derived from the natural scenery of Palestine; crag, stronghold, high place. Main Old Testament passage for meaning of this word; 'Song of Moses' Deut 32:1-43. Against this background of the usage of the Hebrew word may we understand the New Testament Greek usage of 'Petra' (Grk = rock). Here qualities used of the LORD in Old Testament are transferred to Christ (1 Cor 3:10-15); foundation of Christ upon which whole edifice of Christian faith and life is built. Jesus' words are found to be the substance upon which the

wise man builds his house (Matt 7:24-27). This (according to Dr. Alan Richardson) is the probable explanation of 'upon which the Church is built' (Matt 16:18). 'Thou art 'Petros' (a fragment of petra) 'and upon this 'petra' I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.' The saying could hardly mean that Peter is the rock on which the Church is built, since in the New Testament the foundation rock of the Church is Christ (or faith in Christ). Rather it is Peter's rock-like faith in Christ which is to be the foundation of the Church.

In the New Testament there is no sign of the growth of 'Petrology' and later ideas of supremacy of Church leadership should not be read back into the Matthew passage. Peter appeared to be the natural leader of the Apostolic band, but he takes second place to James at the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), and was subject to the rebuke of Paul (Gal 2).

Several ideas of the association of Christ to the Biblical Old Testament conception of God are to be found in D.M. Toplady's famous hymn, 'Rock of Ages'.

'THOU ART ALL FAIR MY LOVE: THERE IS NO SPOT IN THEE'

GEORGE W. NORTH

Lazarus was dead. Mary and Martha had hoped and believed he would live, but their beloved brother had died. Mary had prayed for him, had sent an urgent message, a prayer to Jesus, beseeching Him to come: He would, she knew He would: He loved Lazarus. She believed most sincerely that as soon as Jesus heard His friend was sick He would come immediately and heal him, or speak the word of healing from a distance and heal him. She and Martha wanted the former, but whichever way it was, above all they wanted Lazarus healed. He would drop everything at once, they thought, He would come. But He did not come. Jesus did not respond, not a word even, and Lazarus had died. Mary was heartbroken, she felt she had lost two brothers: the loss was irreparable, but the grief was worse. How was she going to explain it to everybody? She had been so confident, so sure the Lord would come; her brother would be healed, she had said, and so had Martha, her sister. Instead - refusal! They were stunned. Why? Why?

They knew that if He had come their brother would not have died: but he did. Jesus had let Lazarus die - deliberately. It WAS deliberate, it must have been, there was no escaping it, there was no other explanation. He had deliberately let His friend Lazarus die. It was terrible - if he had been in pain, He had done nothing to relieve it; if he had suffered, He had let him suffer: if he had trusted his friend, He betrayed his trust - or so it appeared. What were they all to believe? People were saying, 'Could not this man who gave sight to

the blind have prevented this man from dying?' Mary knew they would talk like that, and she could not answer them. Mary, fighting through all her doubts and fears, believed that He had not come because for some reason or other He WOULD not come; but others did not think like that. They thought He did not come because He could not heal him. They thought He did not love him even enough to visit him - they did not know Jesus or love Him. It was terrible: Mary had nothing to say: what could she say?

With heavy heart the two sisters prepared their brother's body for burial, lavishing upon him the time-honoured parting gifts of love; the anointing, the spices, the graveclothes, the farewell tears. Yet, loving Lazarus as she did, and giving her sister all the help she could, Mary felt she could not give her Spikenard. It was the time for generosity, for love to overflow, but Mary could not do it. Anything, everything, but that precious pot of Spikenard. Lazarus deserved it, all of it, and she knew it was expected of her, but somehow Mary could not give it - she was withheld. There was no other word for it, she was withheld: something held her back from giving it. She was not mean, neither was she callous, or selfish, she just could not do it. For some reason she could not explain - so strong and mysterious within her - she knew she must keep it - so she did. They carried Lazarus to his grave in sorrow, and buried him, their thoughts - wonderings - questionings - unanswered. Jesus - why hadn't He come? Even now? Martha looked around: even now it

was not too late: but He was not there. Mary too, hope sinking under sorrow within her, waited for His coming. It was in vain though; He did not come. He could have done. He was not so far away. Then why? The inevitable question. Would it ever cease within her? Brokenly they watched as the stone rolled over the gaping hole; the last barrier was fixed, only love heard them now, Lazarus couldn't. Tearfully they left him there, and went home, clasping hands; two wonderful women, sisters, sharing each other's grief, knowing that none but they could understand.

Long days of heartbreak and tearful questioning dragged by, following one after another, filled with memories of their brother and a love now lost. Thoughts of Jesus' behaviour haunted them. Visits to the grave to weep there brought no relief. Lazarus loved Jesus and Jesus loved Lazarus. He loved Mary and Martha too. Why did He not come to them - if only for their sakes? He would come, surely He would, He must - would it be today? But He did not come. Three days of waiting, three nights of heart-sickness - a hundred hours of doubts and fears - with tears. The fourth day dawned - and He came.

He came walking in the light, knowing that there was no cause of stumbling in Him. He was walking in another day and another world. He was vividly aware that before many days He would lie in a tomb Himself, and that His Father would raise Him from the dead - as He was now going to raise Lazarus. He came to Bethany to do it, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life', He said. He had come to tell the two sisters this. He wept with Mary and Martha, but not for Lazarus. Lazarus no more wanted his sisters to weep for him than Jesus wanted the daughters of Jerusalem to weep for Him when He died. He had not come when the sisters called for help and healing, He tarried because He wanted to come for greater reasons, to do a greater miracle than He had ever done. His love for them was even greater than they thought, and when it was done He knew they would understand. He was right; Mary did; she began to understand many things.

She had not quite known why she had not been willing to give up her Spikenard for her brother, but now she was beginning to see. What a waste of the precious ointment it would have been. All the loving care with which they had wound him in the clothes of death, all the expense lavished upon him, and all the tears that had been shed for him had been in vain; at one call from Christ he had left the dead. All the trappings, the oils and scents, given in love for Lazarus and demanded by custom also, were unwanted now. Had they all known what was going to happen, they would not have done it; events had proved these things to have been unnecessary. Mary now knew that the Spikenard would have been poured upon him in vain. Full of love, and strangely glad, she welcomed her brother back to life and to home, wonderfully comforted - she had been right.

United again, and sitting talking together, the family exchanged the experiences of the day, and listening to Martha as she told of what Jesus had said when she went out to greet Him, Mary became more and more sure that her action had been right. 'I am the Resurrection and the Life', Jesus said, 'He that believeth on Me, though he were dead yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die'. It was all very involved, none of them quite understood all He

had said, but one thing became very clear to Mary - if Jesus was the Resurrection, then sometime, somewhere Jesus had to die and be buried. An idea began to form in Mary's mind, and the more she considered it, the stronger it grew, and though how, and when, and where she would be able to do what she wanted to do, she could not think, she determined to do it. It would not be easy, for Jesus did not stay after He had raised Lazarus from the tomb. Someone had gone to Jesus' enemies and told them where He was and what He had done. The hunt for Him was on - so He went away. Mary had to wait. Meanwhile, Lazarus became a local celebrity; people came from everywhere to see the man who had been a stinking corpse in a hole in a hill, but who was now alive again.

Then, six days before the Passover, everything changed! Jesus came back to Bethany. The little city of sorrow and joy and of wonder, welcomed Him with open arms - it was famous, and they honoured the One whose power had made the city such a notable place. In His honour they made a great supper in the house of Simon the Leper; the apostles were there, and the blessed family were among the chief guests also. It was a memorable occasion - Lazarus sat with Jesus, Martha waited at table; Mary was there too, though not so visible, she was waiting her opportunity. She had taken with her to the supper her box of precious ointment, a full pound of it, very costly - the occasion had arrived. Approaching Jesus, she poured it upon Him - upon His head and upon His feet - poured and poured till all was gone. He was encased in it, His ordinary clothes were saturated with Spikenard - the odour filled the house and the very supper seemed to taste of it. He knew: He knew what was happening, and so did Mary - she had kept her Spikenard for this, and she knew she had, and so did He. She would not give it for her brother, but she gave it to Jesus, and He told everybody, 'Against the day of My burial hath she kept this', He said. They let her alone - they let her do it - they saw what she did, but only He and she KNEW what she did.

Mary was as the promise of His Father to Jesus, He had become as her brother, she had made the house to be as her own, where first the ointment of death had filled its rooms; she made it as the house of her brother and as the tomb where her brother's body had lain - the greater than Solomon was there, she was His sister, His spouse. The leper's house had become as the garden of love, she had gone with Him to the hill of Spices, she had kept the ointment and the appointment of God. Mary had reached the heart of the gospel story - in one act she had expressed all. Life, death, resurrection, the odour of all those was filling the house, hanging like an invisible cloud, an odour of a sweet smell in every darkest corner, where even the light could not penetrate.

The home of Mary and Martha and Lazarus, the house of Simon the Leper, the smell of the empty tomb, the scent of a woman's hair, the beauty of Jesus' person, combined to manifest the mystery of Love's conquest over man's death - Jesus the anointed. 'He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die' ... 'He that believeth in Me, though he be dead, yet shall he live'. Martha believed it, Lazarus believed it, Mary believed it - somehow she knew that Jesus' body would never lie in a tomb and corrupt into nothingness. Her brother's re-animation led her to Jesus' resurrection and her own.

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THE CRUCIFIED LIFE

LES WHEELDON

THE DEATH OF JESUS

During the earthly life of Jesus, no-one but He understood the death that He was to die. This should not surprise us, for His death is the greatest mystery for the minds of men to seek to understand. Unless men are immersed into this death by baptism into the Spirit, they will still fail to understand it today. The first phase of our study will be to understand the death of Jesus, in its own right, the mystery of what happened on that cross.

'WEEP NOT FOR ME'

One of the greatest misunderstandings concerning the cross is the concept that Jesus is to be pitied for what He suffered. Pictures and carvings have been made in great abundance depicting Jesus in suffering and pathetic weakness and pain. As Jesus walked out of Jerusalem bearing the cross on the last part of His journey to Calvary, crowds followed Him:

'And there followed Him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children'. (Luke 23:27-28).

The Lord Jesus took the cross out of the realm of pity and feeling sorry for Him into the realm of the great battle for the eternal destiny of the human race. He seeks to arrest our attention, and direct us to the battle that He fought for us there. There is a greater tragedy than that Jesus should die, for His death was not in vain. His death was not without purpose. His death was unto great victory and resurrection. He was the captain in a vast army that He led out of the clutches of the devil and death. The greater tragedy is that hearts remain asleep in the deceitfulness of sin, waiting to fall into the abyss of eternal separation from God.

'WEEP FOR YOURSELVES...'

Pity is totally out of place. We should turn to examine the state of our hearts and begin to rend our hearts, weeping for our sins, seeking that God should soften our inner life. Tears of repentance are all that are really called for. So should every man pause, and prepare His heart as He considers the cross of Jesus. He should prepare to embark upon the great journey out of a state of distance from God into intimate fellowship with Him. Man should fear lest he remain indifferent, cold and hard. Many have forgotten how to weep, how to break their hearts before God, seeking Him with readiness to do all His will, and yet no other way is available to approach our Holy God. It is not enough to give some small acknowledgement that God suffered for us. We must arise and set out as Abraham on the great quest for God. Questing and searching are the marks of the Lord Jesus Himself. He

came to us searching for a bride, searching for human hearts to be made alive to inner truths and possibilities. These realms will remain for ever locked unless we bow and begin the search.

We have praise meetings, we have worship choruses, we have prayer meetings, and so the list goes on. But none can organize tears. Jeremiah was a weeping prophet, because he had a weeping God. As Jesus walked up Calvary's hill, there was a veil over the face of God, but it cannot be doubted that the Father shed tears for the race of Adam.

'... AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN'

How sad that if we will not weep for ourselves, we will pass on our hard heart states to our children. They will be hardened by our attitudes, by our words, and worst of all, by our religion. We will pass on our states to all those we have under our influence. God is the mover of men's hearts, He ministers constantly, seeking ways in which men's hearts may be moved to love and care for their children. Bringing up children properly is not a matter only of the right rules, it is also a matter of having the right spiritual impact on children, because we have let God reach our hearts. True compassion for our children will allow us to let God deal with every hard unloving tendency of our natures. What should make us weep is the bottomless need for love, and the selfishness that is a stone wall against love.

'AND THEY CRUCIFIED HIM' (Matt. 27:35)

There was no struggle to force His hands against the wood. There had been no struggle to arrest Him, and now He gave His life. It was not taken from Him. There is no description in the gospels of the physical sufferings - simply the plain statement of the crucifixion. Though we dare not forget the pain, we must look at what was accomplished in the moments of sheer agony.

'FATHER ...'

When we are under pressure to the limit of all our powers of endurance, what comes out of our lips is the fruit that shows whether the tree is good or bad. The first response from Jesus to the cross was to cry to His Father. He did not cry, 'O death', nor did He address the ones who carried out the deed. He turned to His Father. Here lies one of the keys to Calvary. What transpired there was a conversation between the Father and the Son. As They spoke, They were writing an unchangeable covenant between Father and Son, and between God and man. We hear only half of the conversation; the other half we can only guess at. The exchange begins with the cry of Jesus to His Father. Here is revealed what lies at the centre of the Godhead, namely a

union of love, a covenant that is eternal and that can never be broken, nor was it broken, even in the awfulness of separation that lay moments away. Love lies in the centre of God's heart, the love of a Father and the love of a Son. Perfect faithfulness, unshakeable, written in the substance of God's being. Jesus trusted that His Father was in perfect control, and it is this undying bond of faith that made Calvary possible, and then made Calvary so powerful. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and Jesus believed it.

'... FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO'

These momentous words framed our acceptance with God. In this moment of anguish, the great plea for forgiveness rose as the great cry of the heart of God. It was not the expression of what He felt He ought to do. God never could act like that. He poured out in the great spontaneous leap of His inner life. What did He desire for these men who were crucifying Him? He wanted their acceptance with God. Here lies the cornerstone of salvation, that Jesus, while offering Himself to God as a sacrifice for sin, prayed for the Father to forgive mankind for their awful sins and wicked deeds, which reached their pinnacle in the crucifixion of the Son of God.

No voice came in answer, only silence. Yet there can be no doubt in any heart that God answered the prayer of His Son. If it had been audible, it would have been as the sound of many waters, pouring out vast rivers of grace and mercy on a parched humanity, 'Yes, My Son, I forgive them freely'. Forgiveness lies written in the unchangeable words of God, because Jesus prayed it on Calvary. It can be obtained freely and easily, because Jesus paid the debt of all our sins once and for all. I must repent, but I need do no penance. I must turn from my sin, but no religious observance is required to ensure my forgiveness. Man's heart is so proud, that simple belief in the goodness of God is only possible when our hearts are broken. Man will always insist he can play a part in his salvation. This is the grounds for all the religious systems that have sprung up, all declaring the emptiness of what man can do. It is as if a man should be in debt for millions of pounds. A friend comes along and offers to pay the whole debt, but a man insists that he will also pay something. He brings out all he has left, perhaps a pound, and makes his contribution. It is obvious to all that this is dishonouring to the kind act of his friend. Our attempt to add to our salvation is dishonouring to Christ. It is all of grace, through faith. No man can claim a part in this work of God. The best we can do is humble ourselves, and trust in Him alone to forgive us entirely.

No human ear heard what Father said in reply; perhaps angels heard it, perhaps they saw that the Father was not angrily waiting to be persuaded to forgive. The Father was one with His Son in His quest for the grounds of righteous acceptance. After all, was it not God the Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son? It was the act of the Godhead to offer up Jesus. Though the hands of men placed Him on that cross, the whole event passes out of the control of men into a mighty transaction between the persons of the Godhead. You are forgiven. There can be no uncertainty about this. God has heard the cry of His Son, He has paid all our debts.

'IF THOU BE CHRIST SAVE THYSELF AND US!'

The malefactors who were crucified with Him now turn to Him, at first to mock and pour out the hatred and scorn that filled their hearts. Who can be surprised that a stream of bitterness flows from human hearts and mouths when they are pressed beyond measure? How short is the tether that keeps men from anger, hatred and murder? Yet it is from this pit of sin that one of the two men pauses and thinks. Here is true hope, that in the most wicked heart, there is the possibility of repentance. This second thief was no less guilty than the first. His deeds are not recorded as having been less wicked. The great difference lies in the moment of honesty, in the light of true righteousness. How awesome is this moment in every human being's life. Man is a spider that sits in the centre of his web, spinning a great subtle weave of sins and lies. Men become the prisoner of their own sin, in the end believing that they are right to act, feel and be as they are. How strangely self-righteous is the heart of every man. Some have built great edifices of mental sin, speaking endless negative words to themselves. Though more subtle, mental sin is no less offensive to God than the sins of the thief. How men become trapped into believing their own explanations and words. The first thief somehow believed that what he was saying was clever and wise. Yet no matter the subtlety of my sin, there will come moments of truth, when I am faced with the possibility of actually turning from my sin and facing myself in the light of Christ.

How the human heart needs to grasp this. It is possible for you to walk away from the worst snares of your own personality. Those deep inbred tendencies that cause us to bear the name or title of the sin involved. These men were known as thieves. Others might be known as depressives, liars, unstable, unbalanced, cruel, cynical etc. Men became ensnared in the web of their own making, and yet here is the gospel message: a man may see the heart of his sin and walk away from it as definitely as he can walk away from any sin. This is Calvary - it delves into the core of sin, and slays it. How many have dabbled in repentance, thinking they have done God and Christianity a favour by repenting of questionable behaviour. True repentance is forged in the realization that it is me that is the problem. The second thief came to this realization while hanging beside Jesus on the cross.

'Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou are in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward for our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.'

These words came from his lips as blood from wounds. Men must be brought to utter momentous words to God, laying bare their hearts to God in true humility. How superficial is man, how he loves to be casual and light hearted - and yet the most superficial man is capable of uttering words in which he invests all of his being. These words are often few, often spoken so quietly, also often pressed from a man's heart by the awful inner pressure of physical pain, and the imminence of death, yet the Spirit of God can bring a man to see the imminence of eternity, by the power of the gospel alone, bearing a man out of the mere worldly sphere of reference to stand before God. This is the understanding

granted to this man, and each of us must be brought by some means or other to the same extremity, recognizing our guilt before God, confessing our own utter inability to save ourselves, realizing the purity of Christ, and His Lordship and authority over our destiny. We know so little about this man hanging there beside the Christ of God, and yet to him it was granted to exchange words with Christ in His agony. He became one who sets forth for us all the pattern of approach to Christ, as his words are recorded for all to read. His words are precious because they are so intimate, and this is where their true value lies. We must speak to Him what we have not dared to speak to any other. He will not shame us or humiliate us, but will return the words with His own, equally intimate, full of love.

'Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise.'

Christ's words are so simple and yet how deep their meaning, and how great their promise. Notice it is individual and personal, notice too it is immediate - 'Today'! The effects of Calvary are not to be delayed three days. Victory was not delayed, it was obtained on Calvary. His triumph was complete before His physical death, though the fiercest hour of battle was yet to come. The force of this statement is that salvation is immediate. It is not in the dim and distant future that we will reap the rewards of Calvary, it is now.

'WITH ME ...'

These words are the most blissful, far exceeding the concepts of paradise that men have imagined. Now let us leap over all the intervening hours and pass on to the hour of the thief's death. Christ had dismissed His spirit into Father's hands, and had entered paradise that very day, welcomed by the song of countless spirits of men and angels singing to the Lamb that was slain. Who can imagine the welcome of Father to His returning Son from the hour of darkness, so rapidly become the hour of victory? And so Father welcomed Him ... honouring the sacrifice, pleased with the odour of Christ's death. All heaven must have held its breath in awe at the anticipation at what must surely happen on earth as a reward for Calvary. All this took place as the thief hung there, his life ebbing out, and yet strangely at peace since he heard the words of the Christ. Anticipation and hope must have lifted his heart out of the agony of despair, which far exceeds all physical woes. Then came the soldiers to break the legs of the two thieves, surprised to find that Christ had died so quickly. They broke the legs of the repentant sinner, as a means of accelerating the process. With great pain, and with merciful speed, he died. And yet he awoke to find himself in the welcoming arms of Christ. The glory of Christ's promise is that He did not offer the man a place on heaven's back row! He promised him, 'You shall be with ME'. It was not an angel that welcomed the former thief, it was Christ! It was not the glassy sea that the man saw, it was Christ, bearing him up, and presenting him faultless before the Father. There would be time to explore paradise, but that is not the quest of those who enter into those blessed gates. Their quest is to be with Him, Calvary is salvation from sin unto life in Christ.

'And it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour' (Luke 23:44)

For three hours the whole earth was returned to the original darkness of the morning of creation, 'And darkness was upon the face of the deep' (Gen. 1:2). This was not an eclipse of the sun by the moon, this was something far greater. Darkness covered the earth. Just as the light that God created on the first day penetrated into all the world, illuminating the whole globe in glorious light, so now all was plunged into darkness. God the Father drew a veil over His son in the moments of greatest agony, and yet not only over His Son's agony, but also His own. We can only guess at the measure of His own suffering, since scripture gives few clues about this. Abraham lifts the veil a little, as he journeys three days to Mount Moriah, there to offer up his only son. Abraham's heart was not in turmoil, for he knew God's voice, he was set in mature obedience, not in some fanatical act of hurting himself. Yet as he journeyed those three days to Moriah, his heart must have felt like lead, his mind numb with bewilderment as to why it must be. Yet Abraham's arm was stayed by an angel's voice from heaven, and so the sacrifice was spared. Not so the Son of God.

'HE WHO SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON' (Romans 8:32)

God's walk through the centuries of man's disobedience led Him to the appointed place, to Calvary, to the perfect sacrifice. Father's heart bore the greater anguish, the constant pain. Yet here in these hours of fulfilment no angel intervened, though one is left to wonder at their own agony, for they too were not indifferent observers of their Master and Creator. How they must have longed for Father to speak the word of deliverance, how they must have wept as the veil of darkness covered all. Who can doubt that all heaven was silent with unspeakable grief, waiting in the three long hours as Christ was made sin, and Father withdrew to leave His Son to bear our sin alone. Three long hours in which the Godhead was veiled, with one word piercing the gloom, revealing the agony.

'And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani?', that is to say, My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?' (Matt 27:46)

Jesus had referred to God by the title of God, but never is it recorded that he spoke directly to God by any other title than that of Father, except here. These words reveal the horror of His union with the sinful states of man. Christ was plunged into the horror of what man is in sin. We must not think of sin as something, rather we must acknowledge it is someone: it is me. The cup He drank was the spiritual states of man, bitter and poisonous. He drank them and was plunged into spiritual death. The words He cried rose as great arrows into Father's heart, and the silence was not poetic, it was real and bottomless. There was no answer to such a cry, there was only grief and agony of bearing the responsibility for what was being enacted. Father alone was to hear this cry, to which He was unable to answer until the moments had passed. Father was to give a glorious answer: His Son's death would not be for nothing, of that there can be no doubt.

These words should open our eyes to see that these moments of agony were for a real reason. They were certainly not to satisfy a legal point. Forgiveness had been

spoken before these words. Neither was the sacrifice of Jesus to turn away the wrath of the Father. Such a concept makes the Father less willing to save than Jesus, which is so glaringly unthinkable. How the dignity of the Godhead has been maligned, sometimes even by those who are His own, in misunderstanding the depths of the love and the grace of God.

Father waited, His answer would come, it would not be long in coming. He would not be hard to entreat, now that all their longing to save and restore man was capable of fulfilment. In but a few days, God would pour out the Spirit in answer to this question, overthrowing all the enemies of the purpose of God in men. He would descend in cleansing power, applying the cross to the hearts of those who were lovers of His Son, breaking the power of sin in a mighty baptism in the Spirit.

This cry was the cry of man in His separation from God. Jesus had identified Himself with man. He had followed the logic of the incarnation to its ultimate conclusion, He had become one of us, and yet without sinning Himself, He faced our enemies on our behalf. No other could fight our battle. Imagine being locked in a room, and being commanded to remove sin from your heart, and robbing the devil of all his power and authority. Jesus became sin in order to break its power. These three hours represent the baptism of Christ, His death. This preceded His physical death, and declares for us that Christ had died a completely new death.

FOUR KINDS OF DEATH:

1. Spiritual death - sin. 'In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die' (Gen. 2:17). This is the most awful death that exists, rising from a broken relationship with God. The day that man sinned he died, but not physically. His heart plunged from love and light into despair and loneliness. It is described as the 'Fall of Man', and so it was - as man plummeted from fellowship with God into the kingdom of Satan. Man is dead, man is this death. Just as Christ is not merely alive, He is Life, so man is not merely dead, he is death. He spreads the stink of his inner corruption, and contaminates all with his defiling touch.

2. Physical death. Spiritual death implied the inevitability of physical death. As a process, it started on the very day that man sinned, and culminated in the actual fruit when Abel fell dead at his brother's feet. And yet Scripture gives no grounds to fear this death. Jesus Himself consistently referred to physical death as sleep. 'She is not dead, but sleepeth' (Luke 8:52). 'Our friend Lazarus sleepeth' (John 11:11). Paul refers to those 'which sleep in Jesus' (1 Thess. 4:14). Physical death holds no terror in itself, unless there be spiritual death in the human heart.

3. The second death - the lake of fire- eternal separation from God. Sin produces physical decay and death from which a man is resurrected unto judgement. Sin produces eternal consequences, the extent of which can only be guessed at. The very least one can say is that it will be an unending prolongment of all the despair and emptiness that eat away at the human heart through the course of lives in sin on earth. Man is part of the great body of death called sin. Man is born in death, 'lives' in it, and who can be surprised that his future

must lie in it. That the human condition is hopeless is too obvious to state. It is for this reason that Jesus came to create a fourth death.

4. The death of Christ. This death was not the inevitable result of sin, for Christ never sinned. This death was and will always be voluntary, Jesus said that 'No man taketh it (My life) from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father' (John 10:18). The wonder of this death is that it is created by Christ in Himself. He made a place of destruction of all the power of sin and self. It is by virtue of this death that I can die to sin, to self, to the devil, to the world, to lust and to every negative tendency in the human heart. When man sinned, what really died was his relationship with God. When Christ died, sin was slain, and relationship with God was re-opened. The death of Christ is in effect the death of all that is against me, including myself! Though it cost Him so much that I will never cease to be in awe, yet neither will I ever cease to rejoice in the wonder of what His death achieved for me.

'... UNTIL THE NINTH HOUR'

The ninth hour was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and then the long night ended. The sun burst out on the cross, as victory was won. The veil of the temple was rent in two, and Jesus cried with a loud voice: '*It is finished*': the cry of victory, as He rose from the baptism into death, into the glory of the Father. His cry refers to the work He was engaged in. His work was finished. Sin was finished, the need for the old covenant was finished. Adam's heredity was finished, the kingdom of darkness was finished. Now there was only victory upon victory before Him. It is a great mistake to think of Him as being in the grip of darkness for three days, and waiting in gloomy death to be pleased. Christ, by baptism into death, had become a quickening Spirit, and it is as such that He gave His great cry that made the kingdom of darkness tremble and flee from before Him. He fought on behalf of sinful man, in order to become the head of a new human race. The cry is for me in my battle against all my enemies. It is finished. This is rest from all striving, from all attempts to attain the victory. It has already been won and obtained.

'FATHER ...

Here He began, and here He ends on the cross. The impersonal 'My God' has gone for ever, the darkness of separation has passed.

'... INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT'

Now He turns to death. He must still enter into physical death as a man, though now it is not death, only sleep that He is facing. Physical death is the reward for sin, and so once more we realize that this death was voluntary. He did not die from loss of blood or from heart failure, as some doctors have informed us. Christ could not die physically, since death is the wages of sin, and even though Christ had been made sin, yet He had never sinned. If He had not personally dismissed His Spirit, He would have remained alive till today. Christ was and is immortal. He chose to die.

Notice that now He is our forerunner. For those who have been crucified with Christ death holds no terrors. He does not fight death, screaming in resistance to its claws. He yields His Spirit into Father's hands, and to the paradise of Father's presence He immediately went. Had He not said, 'Today thou shall be with Me in paradise'?

There are greatly mistaken ideas about the abode of departed spirits. Many of these ideas have their origin in pagan fears and superstitions. Even some of the Lord's people have thought that this is the domain of Satan, and that when sinners die, their spirits are met by demons and escorted to a place of torment. Let it be clearly established in every mind and heart, Satan has no authority over departed spirits. Ecclesiastes settles the matter when it says,

'And the spirit returns to God who gave it'

Every man's spirit passes into the hands of God at the moment of death. God then determines where that spirit shall await the day of resurrection. As for Christ's Spirit, it entered directly into the bliss of Father's loving hands, not to remain passive, but to descend with a fearful shout of victory to the place of imprisoned departed spirits, to declare the power of what He had just accomplished. What He did in Hades is hinted at in several verses, but it is not central to the matter we are dealing with. Let curiosity not deflect any heart from facing the preaching of Christ to your heart now. Let it suffice to say that Christ preached in Hades, and that when He ascended out of that place, He led a host of captives with Him. We may wonder and want to know more, but Christ wants to lead you out of your captivity of sin, which is as real as the captivity of those imprisoned spirits. Christ can lead you up and out of captivity. That is the message, let it reach your own heart.

Christ's death was triumphant, and miraculous. He who is Life had apparently died. The truth is that death was swallowed up of life. His body was carried to the cool of the rock-hewn tomb, and there it was laid, with a great heap of spices. The tomb was sealed, yet no stench of death or corruption rose from His body. His tomb was filled with life. Life could not really die. Resurrection was inevitable. The third day dawned and early on that day, as the sun rose and touched the highest peaks, while darkness covered the tomb, Jesus was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. He arose and passed out of the tomb, unhindered by the stone or even the rock. He awaited the arrival of Mary, whom He longed to reward for her deepest devotion to Him. He stood waiting, and watched as the angel descended and rolled away the stone, not for Him to leave a prison, but to demonstrate to the world that He was already risen. The wonder of the cross is His death, the resurrection is the inevitable consequence of the miracle of His death. When I embrace the death of my sinful self, and bow in repentance before the Christ, my spiritual resurrection becomes the inevitable consequence. It is spiritual law, written in God, and made available to man. Man can now die and rise again spiritually.

'But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God' (Heb. 10:12)

Christ has offered the perfect sacrifice, and it is now possible for every man to approach God. God had established

patterns of sacrifice by means of which men could obtain forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God. This was sheer grace on God's part, meeting man on a level that man could understand. Sacrificial offering was the centre of life in Israel. The priesthood functioned around it. Every man was involved in bringing his own personal sacrifice to God. He handed the sacrifice to the priest and it was offered to God on his behalf. God smelt the sweet savour, and on this basis acceptance was secured. Every man handled a personal sacrifice at the Passover, slaying the lamb for his own family. This was the hub of spiritual life in Israel.

In Christ the perfect sacrifice was made once and for all. God in heaven smelt the sweet odour of Christ's life, and heard the sweet sound of His intercessions. In response to what Christ did, and was, on Calvary, God has opened the flood gates of heaven to pour out His response to the death of His Son. On the day of Pentecost, God poured out the Spirit without measure, cleansing the hearts of the 120 gathered in the upper room. God swept 3000 into His kingdom. God distributed gifts of the Spirit to the members of His enlarged family, the Church. He was pleased with the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary. He was not rewarding the prayerfulness of the apostles (which wasn't stunningly worthy of reward anyway!). He was not rewarding any sacrifices they had made. He was responding to the sacrifice of Jesus. When a man comes to God asking for forgiveness and cleansing from sin, God will forgive and baptize with a cleansing flood, because He is pleased with the sacrifice of Calvary.

Gazing on Calvary with hindsight, observing the great transactions between Father and Son, there must grow in our hearts the awareness that God is going to respond with great love and awesome determination to the sacrifice of His Son. Distance in time from the event may dim the realization of the immediate power of Calvary, but the Spirit is given to make us aware of the immediate and present effects of the cross of Christ, as though He had just been slain.

By virtue of Christ's death, God is pressing in on the world of men with great willingness to pour out waves of cleansing and recreation. The revelation of Scripture is that the price has been wonderfully paid. All a man must do is repent and believe, and enter in. It is honouring to Christ to open your heart and receive. It is dishonouring to Him to hang back in unbelief.

RECEIVE YE THE HOLY GHOST

God's great covenant has been made on a universal scale in the all-redeeming blood poured out on Calvary. God turned that moment of apparent weakness and defeat into the ultimate victory - the cleansing of every human heart that would believe, the casting out of Satan, the removal of Satan's rights and ground in the human spirit. God triumphed once for all and for ever, and declared His triumph on the third day in the glory of the resurrection. This is surely the central truth of all, the theme of our song, the centre of our heart's gaze.

However wonderful Calvary is, God did not do it that we should be dazzled, or that we should admire what He did. He did it because He wanted us to believe and enter personally and really into our own experience of it. That I am

baptized in the Spirit is not the central wonder. But except I personally am baptized with His Spirit, all His great redeeming love will have been poured out in vain. My intimate knowledge and experience of Calvary is as vital to me as Calvary itself. Jesus did not die to create a new theology. He died to make it possible for me to be ablaze with devotion to Him. Whatever you or I believe about Calvary,

it is useless unless we love Jesus Christ, and have been cleansed from every base thought and wish that held our hearts back from true pure love. The door is open, God has prepared a feast for His Son and all who will love Him. The Father is willing to answer the seeking heart. Rise and enter in.

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TIME IS FOR INVESTMENT OF LIFE

GEORGE W. NORTH

Always it seems wherever I turn in the New Testament scriptures I am confronted with the future. I do not know if this is because I am growing older, or because in the past I have neglected to give due consideration to the future, or whether it is the logical result of years of meditation in Scripture. It may have to do with the maturing of collective truth, the growth of knowledge and experience, the blending of life with understanding, or the natural progression of all things to an inevitable end - which should have been expected. Perhaps all too readily we dwell upon the necessary present, emphasizing apparent things, or stressing and lamenting the absence of needful things, pointing out that which is lacking. To look backwards or around can in some respects be likened to looking downward: to look forward is sometimes thought to be associated with unreality - 'pie in the sky when you die': yet to look forward is also to look upward. Events are moving from past activity to future activity, everything is heading up to that which shall be in the future. Except that which has been fixed eternally by God, all that now is has to pass away.

FULFIL THE CALLING ...

Except a life be effectively cut off from the past so that it can be replaced with another which is of both present and eternal quality, I am not of the future but of the past. The old being is cut off and replaced by a new being which can develop as from birth unto the fulness of life which shall inhabit eternity with God. John says, 'NOW are we the sons of God', and having established this immediately engages our minds with the future ... 'what WE SHALL BE.' Because we are sons we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, but beside likeness in basic sonship, in what other respects may we anticipate being like Him? Being already a son of God, Paul was very conscious of the future, and says he was all the time reaching out to what he did not at the time know, nor apparently had even apprehended. Peter, looking forward to the creation of the new heavens and the new earth, challenges us with the question, 'What manner of men ought we to be?' Each of these men, while living for God wholeheartedly in the present, were also living entirely for the future. They knew that what is must give way to that which shall be.

Jesus the Son of God was fitted for what was to be His future work by the life He lived and the work He did on earth. In the same way He was fitted for what was to be His future life and work on earth by the life He lived and the work He did in eternity past. Not for one minute must anyone be under any illusion about his or her future life. To be in heaven instead of hell throughout the everlasting ages will not of itself be for ever satisfying to the heart. To be taken up with God must surely mean that I am taken up with His concerns and works. I cannot be merely an onlooker or an admirer. An eternity of laziness, or of holiday making, call it what you will, or of keeping of holy day or Sabbath, mere sightseeing, is foreign to nature and life and utterly contradictory to all we know of God. From the day of our regeneration every further moment of life given to us on this earth must be received as an opportunity for preparation for the future. Once the soul is made aware of this, the response of the soul must be, 'I must find and fulfil my earthly calling'. Learning from Paul, I discover that with the fulfilling of the earthly calling, another heavenly calling sounds within; 'the HIGH calling of God in Christ'. To fulfil my earthly calling with my life will alone fit me to reach the mark for the prize of the higher calling; unless I succeed in THIS I shall not be fitted for THAT. I am called and chosen in the present and must be faithful to fulfil God's grace to me now, that I may fit myself for the future.

Relative to the future, my time on earth is very short, there is not a moment to lose, time is not on my side unless I fill it up for God: to waste it is folly, if not criminal. Let not earth bind me, nor its claims distract me. Fill not my eyes and ears with false convictions of indebtedness to this and that, deceive me not by these, thrust them not upon me, my time is not for them. I must pay attention to present commitments, the ministry to God and man is all that matters. These fulfilled lead to that higher, unending ministry which awaits me. Already I have begun this, unknowingly though willingly, I was thrust out into unendingness, launched upon the eternal sea. There were no horizons then nor are there now, I did not look for them, the ministry is eternal, as immeasurable as the everlasting life which alone can fulfill it. Physical things shall not distract me, nor shall handicaps deter me there, labours shall not exhaust my strength nor weariness demand me to rest. There shall be no limitations, the tirelessness of

eternal life shall be as the increase of strength. Therefore let me use what spiritual ability and mental application I now have, and devote myself to my duties without distraction. My body must be presented to Him whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel lest opportunity pass me by never to return. The Lord will keep my body as fit as He wishes for this, that He may satisfy His desires in me, for only this is fulfilment.

...WITH UNFLAGGING ZEAL

This done, He will appoint me to the place I can best fill for Him in the future. In that sphere of service each will be posted according to the faithfulness and devotion displayed in earthly service. Faithfulness is evaluated by the Lord according to the degree of application with which a man devotes himself to his present work. There is no fairer way than this, it is the clearest declaration of each person's love for God and his evaluation of God's will. A man must show that he has an uncomplaining spirit, fully satisfied with his Lord's choices for him here. If this is not so it will already be indicated, if it is so he will give himself with unflagging zeal to serve the Lord he loves with unfeigned love. 'I laboured more abundantly than them all', said Paul: this declaration sets the standard for all workers.

Let no man think there is the slightest degree of harshness about this. The Lord Jesus, that greatest of all God's servants, told some remarkable parables on the theme of service: of these let us consider three. Chief among these is the parable of the Good Samaritan, that story so full of tender love and continued care right out of His own heart. Then there are the two parables of the Talents, and the Pounds, told to spur us on till He come. In the first we learn that we must 'come where they are', and brings us this unavoidable command of our Lord, 'Go and do thou likewise'. The second answers any personal complaints or reservations we may entertain about ability or inability to obey the Lord. We sometimes act, if we do not speak, as though we do not have the ability to go where the needy lie and be unto them as a good shepherd. We forget that all earthly service is probationary and preparatory, and that God knows us perfectly and gives us talents exactly suited to our natural ability. From that moment all work for the Lord is to be accomplished by the devotion of all our natural ability to the use of the talents He has given.

USE YOUR TALENTS

The talents are the Man's goods, that is, they are His substance, the means whereby the Man Christ Jesus lived unto the service of God. There is nothing wrong with the talents, all are perfectly suited to fulfil the desires and demands of God in the kingdom of heaven. Talents given by the Lord are ideal instruments of service, perfectly suited to every one to whom He gives them, and if properly used will bring great gain to the Man who gave them (that is they will add greater glory to the manhood of Jesus). By His own use of them as Jesus of Nazareth, He accomplished much, and our use of them as citizens of heaven on earth shall achieve much also. Very clearly He says of the talents that they are 'Mine

own'. Given to us they are to be returned to Him - though ours they are at one and the same time His, and on the day of reckoning are to be handed back to Him increased by our usage of them.

Everyone is given at least one talent. Not one of the Man's servants is so lacking in personal ability that he cannot handle one. None need feel outclassed or overpowered because of such an array of natural ability in nearly everybody else, he must not become inhibited and introverted before the display of such brilliance. It is not personal ability or inability, nor the 'unfairness' of human parentage, nor the advantages of health, wealth and position, neither is it intellectual achievements, or personal powers that count in His kingdom. Not these things, but the talents are the media of God's servants. Success depends upon personal faithfulness to use the talent or talents properly, and to the greatest advantage. Devotion to Jesus and His talents and His methods and His ministry, decides it all.

If a man cannot by himself achieve success with his own talent, let him invest it with those who co-operatively direct and use them that, together with other's talents, they each may make gain to the glory of God. Every servant must be able to return his talent to his Lord with profit, at the very least, with usury; there must be something earned for God. Properly held, each talent will of itself respond to the spirit and mind of a man, and thoroughly exhibit it. Spiritual strength, heart love, mental evaluation, soul investment, life commitment - these, or lack of them, are completely revealed by the talents. Talents are not designed or given to make the servants wealthy (however an individual may assess wealth in this world). If so, that man must realize that wealth does not lie either in personal ability or the amount of talents he may have, any more than it does in gold or silver or precious stones. Talents are for service not for substance, and are for expression as well as for achievement. They are additions not foundations.

READY FOR THE BRIDEGROOM

When rewarding the servants, the Lord reckons with them upon a basis of one for one. Apparently each talent should increase one hundred percent. Notice that it is not the improvement of personal ability that gets the reward, but the doubling of the talent. Let us beware of thinking that talents are to be thought of as natural talents such as having a good voice, or being musical, or a capacity to lead men, or financial perspicacity, or organizational ability. If this were so, it would imply that in some way a person must double his or her quality of voice, or of leadership capacity, and so on, which is absurd. Improvement may surely be expected in all these things, but the doubling of them is not possible. The Lord is gracious and does not make such impossible demands, but He does entertain proper expectations from investment of His talents in man. In order, the parable of the Talents is the middle one of three recorded in Matthew 25, which places the day of reckoning leading to the giving of rewards as following the coming of the Bridegroom for His Bride. We therefore see the reason for the peculiar nature of the reward - 'Be thou over five or three or two cities', as the case may be.

In the first of these parables the Lord lays down four points upon which final decisions will be made:

1. Personal condition.
2. The state of readiness.
3. The supply of oil.
4. The light.

Upon these four conditions the whole matter will be settled. Being with the Bridegroom is the object of the whole and the reason why the Lord told the parable. By this, wisdom or foolishness are justified by their children. Virginity is not enough to gain the privilege, nor apparently is constant wakefulness, for all ten were virgins, and all slumbered and slept. The final test is readiness, which depends upon:

- a. The supply of extra oil, and
- b. The light - the maintenance of the light.

This last appears to be the deciding factor - 'Is the light shining?' The light lights the way to the Bridegroom, the last few steps are vital, He will come in the dark. We must go in with Him to the marriage. Once the door is shut it will not be opened.

LOVE AND SERVICE

But that is not all there is to the future. Faithfulness to keep virginal in relationship with the Lord must be of first importance to our hearts, but it is not everything. Every one faithfully espoused to the Lord and waiting for His coming must also be His devoted servant. The Bride must not be so wholly taken up with keeping herself pure for Him that she neglects to do anything other than sit down and wait for Him. He may be a long time coming. Sitting down is idleness, she will fall asleep, and may not be aware that her oil is running out and the light burning low. When the Lord comes He will not tarry for anyone who is not completely ready. She it is who must tarry for Him; and if she takes rest in sleep, it must be in full confidence that she has sufficient oil to last through the night till He come. To fill and trim the lamp takes but a few moments. The virgins must recognize that, more than virgins, they are also bondslaves: the Bridegroom to be is also their Lord and Master. At first glance this may appear a horrible thought from which the mind recoils in shock and self-protection. It seems to be so foreign to the beautiful concept of bridal love which is the inspiration of the kind of self-giving so vital to ideal marriage. Surely if there is one union which can be viewed with complete idealism it is the marriage of God's Son with the Bride His Father gives Him. The thought of slavery cannot be entertained in connection with that! Strangely enough this is not so.

What the Lord is establishing by the order of His stories is the relationship between love and service. More than that, He is also making known His generosity. He is no more an over-demanding task master than any proper husband is in an ordinary marriage. True marriage is as much about service as it is about love. Without loving service it would be most difficult to establish claims of love. To love is to give, to give

is to serve, to serve is to gain reward, to be rewarded is to show love. Love is not a reward, it is an award, it cannot be earned, it has to be given; unless love be bestowed freely it cannot be love. Love can be enhanced, increased, extended, and deserved by human hearts, but never bought. When thinking about Christ and His Bride all thoughts which habitually associate slavery with the obnoxious ideas of buying and selling human beings for the purpose of unpaid work and elimination of human rights, coupled with brutality, must be put firmly from the mind.

The kind of slavery the Lord intends is that to which a free person addicts himself or herself upon realization of love within the heart for another. Such love only wishes to spend and be spent in service upon the object of that love. That is not love which only wants to sit around waiting and doing nothing of use to God or man. As regards faithfulness to our Lord of love, now long gone and soon expected back, we prefer to keep our hearts virgin from all other and idolatrous love. We will wait for our Lord, for there is none other like Him: HE is the only one of His Father; He has given Him for us, and us to Him. But as regards service we each must voluntarily addict ourselves to using the talent or talents He has given us. Doing this we shall not fall asleep but take proper rest in order to be refreshed, wide awake and ready when He returns. Any person who deliberately buries his talent will not be found among the sleeping virgins when the cry goes up, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh', he will be cast away into outer darkness. The shades of that darkness have already so blinded his mind that he had refused to even let others develop his talent that something should be gained for his Lord. See then how service, or lack of it, is the clear indication of love or the lack of it. It is absolutely true to say that where there is no service there is no love at all. It is also as true to say that where there is no love there can be no service.

LOVE THE BRETHREN

In attempting to interpret this chapter, we must beware of thinking that the people in the first parable are different from those in the second. All three parables in Matthew 25 are as much three parts of one whole as are the three stories in Luke 15. In both cases the stories were told by the Lord in this particular order so that in diversity He may develop a common theme. How magnificently He did it. The last of the three, of which 'The Talents' is the central one, is commonly called 'The parable of the sheep and the goats'. By this story, unparalleled in Scripture, the Lord points and firmly underlines the wonder of unselective service. When He comes with all His saints He will gather all nations and divide them into two flocks - sheep and goats. Having done so He will then pass sentence upon them. Strangely enough, without so much as a trial, He announces His pre-judgement, and all is revealed. There has been no need for moral or legal argument, for all turns upon the way men have treated Him. Some have treated Him well and others have ill-treated Him, yet whatever they have done, all they did was done in ignorance; no-one knew to whom they were doing it.

It is such an easy thing to serve Jesus. Apparently all a person has to do is to behave lovingly to Jesus' brethren, that

is all - 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren ye have done it unto Me'. This is much harder than it appears. Jesus is testing everyone on his or her love, He is really saying, 'If any man says he loves the Lord and loves not his brother also, he is a liar.' To show love to Jesus a person must love the Lord's brother. The Lord will not allow any man to exist under a delusion about this, no-one professing love for Him would miss an opportunity of giving to Him, and of visiting Him: every one of God's children would go to the farthest extreme to feed and clothe Jesus should He be in need. No sacrifice would be counted too great to make for the Lord. The Lord knows that, but He will have none of this selective service and works. He singles out 'the least of these my brethren', and says He and they are one.

Such service as this requires nothing but love, neither special personal powers, or natural abilities are needed for this. The Lord is showing that, contrary to his own ideas, the one-talented man need not hide his talent; there is no reason for him to try and find an excuse for burying it. The Lord is to be found everywhere - in his brethren - the very least of them (if such an one can be found). A man's brethren are the Lord's brethren, He can so easily be served. The question, 'When saw we Thee?' discloses the simplicity and the naturalness of the loving heart that serves and gives. The talent for doing the unnoticed is perhaps less desirable to some minds than the ability possessed by others to minister in the other four. But Jesus, the unnoticed, notices the giving, the visiting, the receiving.

IN HUMILITY

This may appear to be a total reversal of roles, a complete change of positions, but it is absolutely true to life. In order to correctly assess and pass just sentence upon everyone, the Lord takes the place of the needy, He identifies with the least. We would ordinarily equate Him with the

giver, the visitor, the minister; we do not associate Him with the receiver. Surely the one being visited in sickness or in prison, cannot be the Lord? But He is. This is exactly what the Lord is teaching us by the parable. He is also telling us that true love is not necessarily to be associated with great or heroic deeds. This may be, of course, but the two must not be automatically equated as though they are the same. The Father, He is saying that love is best displayed by doing little unnoticed, unacclaimed things; love is most suited to doing deeds so ordinary that, except by Him, they are scarcely noticed.

In His own peerless way the Lord tells His stories, joining love and service and humility together, making them tell one beautiful story of faithfulness, duty, meekness and devotion. He commences with virginal love, pure and holy, fixed upon Him alone; that must be first. Then He moves on to the need for utter concern with the distribution of His talents and their increase into greater wealth. From that He turns His attention to our brethren - 'Love them', He is saying. We are not to be so concerned with Him and the increase of His business that we have no time for our brethren and sisters and human things. 'Love Me, love them; serve Me, serve them; live for Me, live unto them; wait for Me, work for them', He is saying. Pursue these things with diligence, and do not go to such extremes on one thing that you forget or neglect others. Do not run out of oil, do not bury your talents, do not neglect to minister to the very least of your brethren.

The balanced believer is:

1. The virgin going all out for the Lord.
2. The servant using his Lord's goods (talent/talents as the case may be), and going out to increase them.
3. The brother going all out to care for the Lord's people.

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DR. TORREY'S DECLARATION

A PUBLIC STATEMENT MADE NEAR THE END OF HIS LIFE

I am firmly persuaded that we live in a time when there is a great need that there be a solemn declaration of the fundamental truths of the Gospel.

First of all, let me call your attention to the fundamental importance of the Atonement - that is to say, the death of Christ on the cross for you and me. The death of Jesus Christ is mentioned one hundred and seventy-five times and more in the New Testament, to say nothing of the almost countless references to the death of Christ in the

prophecies and types of the Old Testament; so it is evident at once how large a place that death occupies in the thought of God. Some people say, 'Oh, don't be talking about the death of Christ all the time. Talk about His life.' Well, I believe in talking about His life; I believe in His resurrection, but the fundamental truth of the Gospel is HIS DEATH.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4: 'Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached

unto you ... how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.' This sums it up in one sentence. What was the Gospel? 'That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again.' That is the whole Gospel according to Paul. People come to me and say, 'These songs about the Blood, I wish you would not sing them.' A man went so far as to take one of our hymn-books, and cut out every reference to the Blood, every reference to the Atonement, then he sent it back, and said, 'Now you have a hymn-book that is worth singing.' Why, if that man should go through the Bible in that way, and take out every reference to the death of Christ, he would not have anything but a skeleton left, and if our hymnology is to be along the lines of the Bible, it must abound in references to the atoning death.

We are told in Luke 9:30, 31 in the story of the appearance of Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration that Moses and Elias, the representatives of prophecy and of the law, came back and talked with Him. What did they talk about? 'And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.' That is the one thing they talked about, our Lord's sacrifice. Such a conversation was never held on any other occasion on earth, and the one subject of that conversation was the atoning death of Jesus Christ. Could anything make more for the fundamental importance of His death?

We are told in Hebrews 2:14: 'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Now we are going to hear why Jesus Christ took flesh and blood, why the eternal Son of God became incarnate. People are constantly asking, 'Why did the eternal God become a man?' Listen. 'He took part of the same that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.' Here we are told in the inspired Word of God that the purpose for which Jesus Christ was incarnate was that He might die. When Jesus came into the world, He came into the world for the purpose of dying. The Bible teaching is that the death of Christ was no mere incident of His incarnation, but the very purpose of His incarnation; that He was born as a Man, that He died as a Man. He Himself said the same thing.

In Matthew 20:28 He says: 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' We are told in 1 Peter 1:10-12 that the prophecies of the Old Testament revealed by the Holy Spirit of God concerning the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which should follow them after the death of Christ, was a subject of intense interest to the inspired men of the Old Testament, and in verse 12 we are told that the angels desire to look into these things. No subject is more interesting to the angelic world than the subject of the Atonement.

In the picture of heaven and heaven's choir in Revelation 5:8-12, 'They sang a new song, saying, 'Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy Blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.' The atoning death of Jesus Christ is the one great central theme of heaven's choir. That man who cut the hymn-book, and cut out all reference to the Atonement, all reference to the atoning death, all reference to the Blood, he will be very lonesome when he gets to heaven, for that is the one theme of heaven's song.

In the second place, what was the purpose of Christ's death? Let us hear His own statement: 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many' (Matt. 20:28). Jesus Christ Himself here declares that the purpose of His death was to provide a ransom for many; that His death was the price paid to purchase our life. Christ died that you and I might live. 'The wages of sin is death.' He provided a ransom. He died that He might pay the price that was necessary to purchase life for you and me.

To sum up: When Jesus Christ died upon the Cross of Calvary a perfect satisfaction to God's holiness was made regarding your sin and mine. A basis was provided upon which God could pass over and blot out the sins of the vilest sinner; and now, on the ground of the perfect satisfaction that Christ made on the cross of Calvary, pardon is offered to everyone. Some of you want to do something to atone for sin. You cannot, and you don't need to. There is nothing to be done; it is all done; you have simply to accept as your personal Saviour the perfect Sin-bearer whom God has provided. The moment you do so; the moment you accept God's testimony regarding Christ, that every one of your sins was laid upon Him, and that God is ready to forgive you on the ground of Jesus having died in your place - the moment you do it, every sin you ever committed is blotted out, and you stand before God clean and white, without one sin to your account.

Would you like to know that there was not a cloud between you and God, knowing that every sin you ever committed was atoned for and put away, knowing that God had blotted out every sin, and that you stood perfectly just in God's sight? Well, you can do it. How? Believe what God says about the death of Christ; that Christ's death was the propitiation for your sins, satisfying all God's wrath on account of your sin, and simply trust God to forgive you because Jesus died in your place. 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16:31).

But listen. There is absolutely no other ground upon which any man or woman can ever be accepted before God, except on the ground of the atoning death. The forgiven sinners are all who believe on Jesus, and the unforgiven sinners are all who do not believe on Jesus. **TO WHICH CLASS DO YOU BELONG?**

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In this issue:

- 1 THE POWER OF LOVE G.W.NORTH
- 6 FROM JEHU TO JESUS D.HUSSEY
- 7 THOU ART ALL FAIR, MY LOVE
... G.W.NORTH
- 9 THE CRUCIFIED LIFE L.WHEELDON
- 14 TIME IS FOR INVESTMENT OF LIFE
... G.W.NORTH
- 17 DR.TORREY'S DECLARATION