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"BEHOLD, NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME; BEHOLD, NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION."

2 Cor. 6:2. Isa. 49:8.

These words of the Apostle, quoted from the Prophet Isaiah, are generally understood to be a call to the world to improve the present opportunity of accepting Christ by faith in order to salvation, with the warning that the present time furnishes the only opportunity, this being the day of salvation.

But this is not the meaning of the text. Neither the Apostle nor the Prophet addresses the world. Both address justified, consecrated believers. The class addressed is plainly seen from Isaiah's prophecy, to be consecrated believers of the Gospel Age – the Christ head and body. It thus reads, "Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time I heard THEE, and in a day of salvation have I helped THEE: and I will preserve THEE, and give THEE for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; that THOU mayst say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves." – Isa. 49:8,9.

It is the anointed, the Christ, head and body, selected and developed during the Gospel Age, which is to accomplish the great work here pointed out – the work of the resurrection, or restitution, in the next age, saying to the prisoners in death, "Go forth," and to those in the darkness or shadow of death, "Show yourselves." "Now," the Gospel Age now closing, has been the acceptable time for justified believers to offer themselves as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God; because this age was specially set apart by God for the calling and development of this class of *sacrificers* whose sacrifices are *now acceptable*.

"Now," or the accepted time, did not commence until the Gospel Age began, at Pentecost; or rather in the fullest sense it began with Jesus' sacrifice, dating from his consecration at baptism. The sacrifice of Christ, which actually takes away sin, was THE ACCEPTABLE sacrifice; and it must be an accomplished fact, before any of the condemned sinners could be actually legally justified, so as to be *accepted* as joint sacrificers and joint heirs with him. When the sacrifice had been made, any who trusted in it were legally justified, their sins being canceled, and the righteousness of Christ imputed to them by faith.

Though justified thus by faith in Christ's redemptive work, none of those [R859 : page 5] justified in this age have been permitted to reach actual restitution to human perfection, that being the privilege not of this, but of the coming Millennial Age. But that right to human perfection and lasting life, having been secured for all, those who now by faith accept it, are reckoned as now possessing that perfection – as though now perfect men. Such during the Gospel Age have been invited to present themselves as living *sacrifices* to be used up in God's service, and the assurance is given that whoever thus sacrifices "NOW" during the *acceptable* time, is accepted of God, and shall in due time receive the reward of the crown, the throne, and the divine nature, as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ whose example they thus follow – *after* being justified by faith in his sacrifice for their sins.

Those who before the death of Jesus our ransom, trusted in God's promises, and walked in obedience to God, were not actually justified until the only sacrifice which could take away sin, was actually [R859 : page 6] offered. Nevertheless their faith shall receive a reward in the times of restitution. But living before the "acceptable" time, they were not informed of the "high-calling" of the divine nature and joint-heirship, and therefore were not invited to thus offer themselves as members of the body of Christ and joint-sacrificers with him. "Now [the Gospel Age] is the accepted time." "Now is THE day of [the "great"] salvation."

The class thus called and accepted, the Prophet declares is called and chosen for the special work of accomplishing the salvation of the world – their restitution from death to perfect life in the next age. Then that will also be a day of salvation, – a day of salvation for all the world. In that day men will neither be called nor permitted to offer themselves as living sacrifices, nor to deny themselves the comforts, joys and righteous liberties then provided for all, but simply to forsake sin and pursue righteousness.

Paul, in referring to these words of the Prophet, urges those who have received this grace [favor] of justification, to see that they receive not this grace in vain – (2 Cor. 6:2). This leads us to consider how we could receive the grace of justification *in vain*.

Since we may not in this age have an actual restitution to perfection, the only special advantage of being justified now, is that it affords us the opportunity of presenting ourselves as *acceptable* sacrifices, and candidates for the divine nature and joint-heirship with Jesus. Those therefore who have received the grace (favor) of justification through faith in the ransom, who realize that though still imperfect, they are *reckoned* of God as perfect so long as they rely upon the ransom, and who yet neglect to USE this reckoned perfection, and to present themselves covered by it, as acceptable sacrifices to God's service within the acceptable time, have received the favor of justification *in vain*; and consequently they are little, if any better off than the world, whose day of acceptance to favor is in the age coming.

But those who have been justified, and who have also consecrated themselves as sacrifices, may also have received the grace of God in vain, if they turn back to the world and to the gratification of the flesh, despising or ignoring their covenant.

If we would make our high calling and our election sure, we must fully carry out our consecration – even unto death.

Paul had a very clear idea of what a life of consecration meant. He did not have the idea which many now seem to have, that it simply meant an easy-going tranquility of disposition which might win friends in every direction and be at peace with all the world. No, such is not the experience of those who are faithful at the post of duty; for those who will live Godly in this evil time, shall suffer persecution in some shape or form, and generally in many forms.

Our consecration is to *active service* for the Master, and a patient uncomplaining endurance of whatever it may cost in the way of sacrifice. Faithfulness to our covenant will not shrink from any service because of the cost, and he that endureth unto the end shall receive the crown of life. Let us mark well the example and counsel of Jesus and the Apostles, that we may gain courage and strength by the way.

Paul gives a vivid picture of the true Christian life which we cannot ponder too carefully: – "Giving no offence in anything [against the principles of truth and righteousness] that the ministry be not blamed. But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonment, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; by pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left; by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and yet true; as unknown and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." – 2 Cor. 6:3-10.

What a nondescript is such a life before the world; yet how perfectly this marks out the course of the truly consecrated. It is not a life of easy lethargy; it is not a course that secures the approval and friendship of the worldly minded; it is not a course which secures present temporal advantage; nor is it a course agreeable to the flesh;

yet in it, the "new creature" rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and in every condition gives thanks for the privilege of fellowship in the sacrifices and self-denials with Christ Jesus our Lord and Redeemer.

In the little time which remains before the glorification of the remainder of the Body – the church, let us endeavor to make our calling and election sure, and thus prove that we have not received the grace of God in vain. If you have made the covenant of sacrifice, even at the eleventh hour, your sacrifice should be on the altar and the fire of zeal under it consuming your time, talents, reputation and all in the heavenly service. Let it be burning briskly, that the odor of sweet incense may ascend to God, that you may be fully accepted in the Beloved in this *acceptable time*, and be made partaker of the glory to follow – now at hand.

