

"THE PRIZE SET BEFORE US."

ALL who are familiar with the Scriptures well know that the Christian course in the present life is represented therein as a race-course at whose farther end is a prize for all who so run as to obtain it. In the WATCH TOWER and in MILLENNIAL DAWN we have frequently pointed out this fact and, upon all professing to be God's people, have urged faithfulness in running the race.

But in showing the Divine Plan of the Ages – from Eden lost to Paradise restored – it has been both necessary and proper to point out that the prize set before us in the gospel is a different one from that before Israel after the Flesh, during the Jewish age, and different also from that which will be set before mankind in general during the Millennium. And now something more upon the subject seems necessary from the fact that some have misunderstood us, and gotten the idea that there are two or three prizes, any one of which may now be *run for* successfully, and equally to the Lord's pleasing. These are defined to be, (1) The high calling, to divine nature and glory; (2) Spiritual nature of a lower order than the *divine* nature; (3) Human perfection by restitution.

The advocates of the errors referred to proceed to explain three sets of conditions or terms to be complied with, and that which of the three prizes is won at the end of life's journey, will depend upon which of the three sets of conditions has been followed. (1) To gain the chief prize requires a full consecration of heart, followed as absolutely as possible, in thought, word and deed. To this we assent. (2) To gain the second prize, say they, one should live a good, honorable, Christian life, but need not specially sacrifice the good-will and esteem of worldly people. In other words, an honorable and generally esteemed Christian is supposed to be running for this second prize – successfully, whether he knows it or not. From this view we dissent, and will give our reasons later. (3) They hold that for the third prize

little or no running is necessary, that if one merely feels his own unworthiness and trusts in the merit of Christ as the ransom for all, accepts the restitution promises, and avoids open wickedness, he will get this prize. Some, indeed, take credit to themselves in the matter, erroneously considering that they are cultivating the grace of humility, – saying, I don't aspire to be a king on the throne of God's Kingdom. Oh, no! a humbler place will do me. From all this also we dissent.

The facts are these: –

(1) There is but the *one* prize held out by the Scriptures as an offer during this age, as there was a different one held out previously, and as there will be a still different one held out during the Millennial age. The Scriptures are very definite respecting this *one* prize of the Gospel age. See Eph. 4:4; Col. 3:15.

(2) None of God's laws or regulations conflict with Justice: they all harmonize with it. And hence God could not require *less* than a full consecration to him and his will, on the [R1668 : page 212] part of *all* whom he accepts into his family – either on the divine or human plane. Nor could he accept as satisfactory or worthy of *any* prize the self-pleasing or the world-conforming rules above laid down for the second and third prizes.

Things are either right or wrong; and the right side is always God's side. The reason that the path of the "little flock" is declared to be a narrow or difficult one at present, is, that it is God's path – the *right* path; and the world being wrong, – out of harmony with God, and consequently out of harmony with righteousness – is in opposition, directly and indirectly, to all who are in harmony with God and righteousness. And the more progress we make into harmony with God and righteousness the more the worldly minded will hate us, and the more narrow and difficult the path of life will be. Hence the Apostle's words: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (Jas. 4:4.) Can anyone suppose that God offers prizes of any grade or degree to those at *enmity* against him even to the extent of sympathy

and harmony with his enemies and opponents? Surely not. Hence this one text alone would contradict all this theory respecting a second and a third prize being now offered.

We repeat, what we have previously stated many times, but evidently not yet often [R1669 : page 213] enough, that precisely the same requirements of God's law will be in force during the Millennium as are now in force. Nothing less could be accepted; for God's requirements of the Church are as moderate as justice would permit, at any time, viz.: (1) faith in Christ as Redeemer; (2) obedience, as far as possible, to his law of Love.

We ask, Could God either ask or accept less than this, and yet be just, – either now or at any time? Assuredly not!

But while the Gospel age *requirements* and those of the Millennial age will differ nothing, there will be another point upon which there will be a difference – viz., obedience to that law will be easier in the next age than now; because then Satan will be bound, and blind eyes opened to discern right from wrong on every subject. Hence the Lord has attached a *greater* prize to the call made during the Gospel age, which he designs shall select not only those who love righteousness and truth and the divine favor, but who so love them that they would *sacrifice all else* for the sake of these.

True, we have taught that there will be a *second* class or company of saints saved during this Gospel age – the tribulation saints of Rev. 7:9-17 – but we have nowhere intimated that they will be accepted upon any *other terms* than those given the overcomers, the first class. The terms for all who will attain to either class will be *full consecration*, even unto death. The difference between the two classes on account of which the one class gets the prize and the other class is "saved so as by fire" is that the overcomers have more *zeal*; they pay their consecration vows *gladly*. The tribulation saints fail to get the *prize*, because although consecrated lovers of the Lord, their love lacks the proper fervency to hold their lives constantly up to the point

of self-sacrifice, where their own preferences would be yielded always and promptly to the Lord's.

Because they lack this *fervency* of love they are not "overcomers," and cannot be rewarded as such with the great prize. But they have a measure of love and consecration, and they trust in the merit of Christ's great sacrifice, and thus abiding under the shadow of the New Covenant they are not wholly rejected by the Lord, although unworthy to constitute members of his "bride" or "body," joint-heirs of his glory, honor and power.

In order to bring such of these as can be brought into full fervency of spirit and to a right estimate of their covenant, the Lord's rod of *affliction* is brought to bear upon them, until the souls melt in the furnace and the dross is separated, so that the precious element may be saved.

But it may be asked, Is not this the experience of every Christian? And if these tribulation saints, the second or "great company" are to be *purified* from dross as well as the first company or "overcomers," why should they not be all of one class or company? [R1669 : page 213]

Yes, we answer, it is true that the majority of Christians are of the *tribulation class*, that is the reason it is called "a great company," while the overcomers are called a "little flock." The difference between them is not in the degree of purity finally attained, but in the manner of obtaining it. God has a special pleasure in those who *delight* to do his will, and who do not need to be whipped into an appreciation of right and wrong. These he calls "overcomers." These have the likeness of the Lord (Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2; Col. 3:4), and are accounted worthy to be with him where he is and to share his honor, glory and Kingdom and power. – Rev. 17:14.

It is not because the "little flock" of "overcomers" *suffer more* than the great company of tribulation saints that they are to get

the prize, but simply because they suffer *gladly, willingly, self-sacrificingly*. The tribulation saints doubtless suffer as much as the "overcomers" or more; and the "overcomers" have so much pleasure, in the divine favor, in connection with their sufferings in this present time, that it makes their *willing* services and sacrifices seem but light afflictions which are thus working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

As for the Restitution race and prize: No one can run for it until it is offered. There is no such offer for the present age. True, there may be children and others now living who will continue down through the "great time of trouble" and into the time of the reign of the great Restorer and Life-giver, and some droppings and showers of restitution favor are already manifest, but the fact remains that full restitution is not yet offered as a prize, and cannot be offered until the Church shall first be perfected in glory.

It is true that restitution was the prize held before fleshly Israel, but that offer ended with the end of their Law Covenant.

But the misapprehension on this subject quite possibly arose from our showing in the DAWN and elsewhere that *justification*, the first step into the New Covenant and present high calling is the *equivalent* of restitution. Justification by faith is indeed a *restitution by faith*. As a race we had fallen from divine favor into sin and degradation, and God could no longer deal with us, for we were unworthy. But after Christ had redeemed us – bought our formerly possessed rights and privileges – the offer was made to whoever *believed* this and desired to *act upon it*, that upon their mental acceptance of this they would be counted or reckoned in God's sight *as though* freed from all sin, *as though* restored to the perfection and divine favor enjoyed by Adam before he sinned. Thus it is true that the honest-hearted believer who accepts Christ stands in the divine sight *as though* fully restored.

But why reckon him thus? Why not let all wait until the Millennial age, and then *actually* start their feet in the way that leads to full restitution?

It is in order to make them *eligible* to the call of the present age. As shown above, the call of the present time is a call for willing *sacrificers* to present themselves as joint-sacrifices with Christ, in the service of God (his people and his truth). And since Christ was a lamb without spot or blemish, and since no blemished sacrifice could be accepted upon God's altar, and since we by nature, actually are blemished, *therefore* it was necessary that we should be either *actually* or *reckonedly* made perfect men, before we could be invited to become joint-sacrifices with Christ and thus to become joint-heirs of his glory.

God chose to justify us or restore us or make us right *reckonedly* or by *faith*, instead of actually, so that those who chose might draw back after being justified by faith. All who, after being justified, draw back and refuse to use their *reckoned* justification for the purpose intended merely show that they received the grace of God that far in vain. (2 Cor. 6:1,2; Heb. 12:15-17.) Their reckoned justification lapses or becomes void, – not being used as a stepping-stone to full consecration, as God had intended.

The Gospel age as the great antitype of the Day of Atonement, must first close, its "better sacrifices" (the Church, Head and body) must be finished to the uttermost and be accepted before God, before the great High Priest can or will lift up his hand [power] to bless the people with the restitution call and blessings.
