

ABLE TO COMPREHEND WITH ALL SAINTS.

"PROCRASTINATION is the thief of time," is an old proverb and a true one: and time lost means opportunities lost, and the advantages and privileges which went with the opportunities, also lost. If Christian people (all the truly consecrated) could get the proper view of the divine plan, and could see clearly, with the eyes of their understanding, the great work which God is now doing amongst mankind, and could see their privileges in connection therewith, life would become much more real, much more earnest, to them than it is. We do not mention the world in general, but recognize it as having no hearing and no sight for divine things now; – being blinded by the god of this world, and deafened by the babel and clamor, which he induces and perpetuates for this purpose. Thank God for the gracious promises of the Word: that in the new dispensation, under Christ's Millennial Kingdom, all the blind eyes shall be opened, and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped. (Isa. 35:5.) But, seeing that the world is blind and deaf, we pause not to attempt a miracle with its children; but follow the Lord's injunction, and speak, so far as possible, only [R3167 : page 92] to those who have ears. "He that hath an ear, let him hear."

Those who have heard in any measure, – who have seen to any extent, – who have tasted to any degree, that the Lord is graciously extending his favor toward all those who come unto him through the Redeemer, and who have thus come into the household of faith, – are privileged far beyond the masses of our race who are still aliens and strangers and foreigners to God. But one difficulty is, that through false doctrines instigated by the Adversary, believers have gained so wrong a conception of the divine plan, and of the divine character formulating that plan, that they not only do not love God with all their heart, but, on the contrary, they desire to have as little to do with him as possible; – as little as will secure their everlasting escape from an

eternity of torture, which they have been taught to believe he has prepared for the great mass of his creatures.

We cannot blame people, who view God and his plan from this false standpoint, if they take comparatively little interest in studying the Bible, which they believe is the revelation of these horrible preparations, – predetermined before the world was made. Our first effort in approaching the average Christian professor should be to anoint the eyes of his understanding with "the oil of joy," by briefly explaining to him the way of the Lord more perfectly. It is well to begin where God begins, and where the apostles begin the story of salvation; viz., with the cross of Christ. It is well to impress, first of all, that as a race we are all under condemnation through original sin, and that there is no escape for any, except through the Redeemer whom God has provided. Next, it is well to show just what the penalty is, that it is not eternal suffering, – torment; but eternal death, a death from which there could be no recovery, – annihilation. Next, it will be in order to show God's compassion in providing the Savior, who paid for us the very penalty against us – that in his flesh he "suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18): that he did not suffer eternal torment, but the very penalty against us; viz., eternal death. Next, it will be in order to show that although the flesh of Christ was thus given up eternally, as man's ransom price, God nevertheless raised him from the dead, giving him a new life, a new being, – making him a "new creature;" and that accordingly he is no longer a man in the flesh, but is again a spirit being, now of the divine nature, far above angels, principalities and powers. – Eph. 1:21; 1 Pet. 3:22.

Next in order it will be proper to show *how* the death of Christ could effect *all* mankind; – that it was because Jesus took the place of father Adam, and thus redeemed his life; – and because the whole race was condemned in Adam, therefore his personal redemption would imply, legally and justly, that the penalty was sufficient for the sins of the whole world condemned in him, – and not condemned on their

own account. Next in order we should show that the object in this purchase of the world, was, and still is, that every member of Adam's race might have an opportunity, as Adam had, of showing the Lord his willingness to be obedient to him and to his laws, and thus to obtain at his hand the great gift of everlasting existence. To Adam only this will be really a *second* chance, as his race has had no chance yet; – being born in sin and under its penalty of death.

By this time your hearer should be ready to see that the trial which God proposes to give mankind is not such a trial as comes to a felon, a convict, before a criminal court, – to determine whether he is guilty or not guilty; for, on the contrary, in the case of mankind God already has determined that "*all are guilty*," that "there is none righteous, no not one." It is because such a trial would be a useless mockery, that nothing of the kind is proposed by the Lord, though this is the unreasonable thought common among his people. Seeing that we are hopeless as respects clearing ourselves, God has by his own plan and arrangement already paid the penalty for every man, – through the sacrifice of his Son. Hence, the whole world of mankind, when put on trial for life everlasting, will not stand trial as convicts, but as redeemed freed-men whose release from the original death sentence has been fully paid by the ransom-sacrifice of Christ. Their trial will be to determine their choice of lasting life or death – on God's terms – as Adam made choice in his trial; – to determine which they would choose after gaining a knowledge of sin and its penalty, everlasting death, – and a knowledge of righteousness and the reward of righteousness, life everlasting; – their choice being indicated by their obedience or disobedience to the divine mandates.

Whoever follows the plan thus far, is prepared to see that God has not yet given to mankind in general the great trial, or opportunity secured for all by the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, – for testing their worthiness or unworthiness of life everlasting. All who are not grossly blinded by error and prejudice can see that a full, fair opportunity for judging between right and wrong, and for choosing the right and

rejecting the wrong, has not yet come to the world as a whole. They can see that ignorance, prejudice and superstition are blinding the world still; and looking back along the aisles of history they can see that such blindness has been in the world for centuries; – since before the redemption price of the world was paid. **[R3167 : page 93]**

If your hearer be of an inquiring mind he will now be questioning when or how a full knowledge and opportunity, or trial will, or could be extended to mankind; and this will be the favorable opportunity for reminding him of the Apostle's words, "God hath appointed a day [still future] in the which he will judge the world [not condemn the world, for the world is condemned already, for which reason Christ died for the ungodly; – but he will judge the world in the sense of granting all a trial] in righteousness [under righteous, favorable, just, reasonable conditions] by that man whom he hath ordained [the great Messiah, the Royal Priest, whose reign is to bring blessing and uplift to whomsoever will of all the families of the earth]." (Acts 17:31.) It is of these times of blessing and restitution that the Apostle Peter declares that all the holy prophets since the world began have spoken. (Acts 3:19-21.) And no wonder, since they spoke as oracles of God; for God has had this very purpose from the foundation of the world; – knowing in advance the course that sin would take, and the course which man would take under the delusions of sin, because of experience.

BEGINNINGS OF COMPREHENSION.

As the mental eyes and ears of the believer begin to take in this fulness of God's provision for his creatures, his former fears begin to subside; and he begins to get a realizing sense of the goodness and love of God, as never before. But still he will have queries. He will want to know when this day of which the Apostle speaks will begin; – the day of the world's judgment, or trial in righteousness, under favorable conditions. He will want to know why it did not begin immediately after our Lord's death and resurrection, – if it waited for

and was dependent upon his atoning work. This will be the proper opportunity for opening before the eyes of his understanding another department of our heavenly Father's gracious plan; – showing him what is so clearly set forth in the Scriptures; viz., that the Father has purposed an elect and select Church to be as a Bride joined to Christ, her Lord and Redeemer and Bridegroom; – as a special illustration of divine mercy and goodness, sharing his glory, honor and immortality; – "changed" to the divine nature in the first resurrection.

He now will begin to understand faintly what the Apostle meant when he declared, "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared [in reservation] for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit." (1 Cor. 2:9,10.) He will begin to appreciate the fact that when we enter the Lord's family and become members of the household of faith, we are only on the threshold, of knowledge and appreciation, and have need of progress and growth. He will begin to understand the force of the Apostle's words when he said, speaking to Christians, and not to worldly people, "I bow my knees unto the Father,...that he would *grant you*... that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ." (Eph. 3:14-19.) As again he says, "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of [**R3168 : page 93**] you in my prayers, that the...Father of glory may *give unto you* the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." – Eph. 1:16-18.

It requires time for heart and head so to expand as to take in a glimpse of such a wonderful blessing as this which God has provided for the "elect." But whoever gets even a faint glimpse of the greatness of God's favor toward the Church, will not be surprised that in the divine plan so liberal an allowance as nearly nineteen centuries was made for the calling and chastisement and perfecting of the saints for

the great and glorious work to which they, as joint-heirs with Messiah, are called. Neither will they think strange, the fiery trials which try all of these whom the Lord our God calls, and accepts as probationary members of the elect Kingdom class. They will perceive, readily enough, that if it was expedient, yea, necessary, that our Lord Jesus, with all of his experience in the heavenly courts, must "learn obedience by the things which he suffered," and prove his loyalty to the Father by faithfulness even unto death, much more must his followers – *whose previous history was that of sinners* – be tried and thoroughly tested in respect to their loyalty to the Lord.

From this standpoint, the experiences of Christians take on a totally new meaning; and those who have made consecration of themselves to the Lord realize that they are running for a mark, and for a prize; – no longer are their steps so unsteady, no longer are their hearts so faint and so careless, no longer do the world's baubles prove so enticing and ensnaring. God is thus working in them through the Word of his grace, through its exceeding great and precious promises. Through these he works in them to *will* to be faithful to him; and then to *do*; – conform their lives to the requirements of his Word. The same truth becomes also a power, a strength of God, in them, enabling them more and more to do those things which they should – the things pleasing in God's sight.

In this view, all is clear and plain; not only do we [R3168 : page 94] see that God permits evil in the world that the *world* may learn certain lessons of bitter experience, as to the natural rewards of evil doing, but we see also a ministry of evil in respect to the *saints* – in their testing and polishing and refining; making them ready, and proving them worthy, as overcomers, to inherit the wonderful things which God has in reservation for the faithful. This will be, to the intelligent believer, a full explanation of why God has not yet undertaken the blessing of the world; – of why the promises, made through the prophets, of a coming time when the knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth, and the curse be rolled away, have not yet been

fulfilled. They can see that it is the rolling away of this curse, the wiping away of all tears, the bringing of blessings to mankind, that is the very work for which God has commissioned his glorified Son, and for joint-heirship in which he is selecting the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

From such a vantage point of view, the most sluggish intellect will catch wonderful and refreshing glimpses of glory and blessing that are to follow, as soon as the present "ministry of evil" shall have accomplished its work. Looking into the future they begin to realize something of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine plan, and they will be ready to exclaim, "Oh, if God's plan is so great that it has required such a broad foundation, such great preparation, in the person of our Lord, and in the persons of his people who will be joint-heirs with him in the Kingdom, how very great must be the blessing that shall be ministered to the world through these, when the appointed time shall come!"

At first, the thoughts of the blessing coming to the poor groaning creation, and of the glories coming to the faithful and loyal and suffering saints, will overwhelm your auditor; and he can see and think of nothing else, for a while, than the stupendous grace of God manifested in this wonderful plan of human salvation. But, by and by, he will begin to think of himself, and what part he is privileged to have under the divine arrangement; and, as he sees a possibility of joint-heirship with the Lord amongst the faithful overcomers, he will find that all the exceeding great and precious promises of God's Word, and the new hopes inspired thereby, will be an energy and a power in his soul which he never before knew; – a purifying energy, a sanctifying power. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Instinctively he will begin to heed the Apostle's exhortation, to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us; and to run with patience the race that is set before us in the Gospel." – Heb. 12:1.

Soon after, various exhortations of the Word will have a new and a deeper meaning to him. As for instance, when he reads the Apostle's exhortation, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the reverence of the Lord" (2 Cor. 7:1), his words, his thoughts, his actions, his clothing, his personal appearance, will all come under inspection from a new standpoint; – he is no longer a condemned sinner, but a justified and sanctified son of God; – his representative; – his ambassador. It will be a new thought to him, to some extent, that cleansing the flesh is a part of the sanctifying work; and that a cleansing of the spirit or mind or thoughts or intentions, is equally necessary, – in order to the attainment of a condition of heart pleasing and acceptable to the Lord. And although he will never attain the perfection in the flesh, because of inherited blemishes, he will, nevertheless, assuredly make considerable progress in this direction; and not to see some progress should be a cause of disappointment, and should lead to self-examination at the mercy-seat. (Heb. 4:16.) He will hear, moreover, the Apostle Peter's exhortation to the same class, saying, "Add to your faith virtue [fortitude]; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge self-control; and to self-control patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you and abound they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ...For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." – 2 Pet. 1:5-8,11.

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LIFE AND DEATH.

So he died for his faith; that is fine –
More than most of us do.
But stay, can you add to that line

That he lived for it, too?

In his death he bore witness at last
As a martyr to truth;
Did his life do the same in the past,
From the days of his youth?

It is easy to die; men have died
For a wish or a whim –
From bravado or passion or pride –
Was it harder for him?

But to live – every day to live out
All the truth that he dreamt,
While his friends met his conduct with doubt,
And the world with contempt; –

Was it thus that he plodded ahead,
Never turning aside?
Then we'll talk of the life that he led –
Never mind how he died.

– *Ernest Crosby*.

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