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"DELIVERED FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH"

DURING THE GOSPEL AGE there has been but one condition upon which any may come to the Father. The Lord does not propose many ways, but only one way. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life" – now. But when the Kingdom comes there will be a highway, a more favorable, an easier way, as the Lord states through the Prophet Isaiah. In it there will be no stumbling-stones; it will not be narrow and difficult, but comparatively easy; and throughout Messiah's reign of a thousand years, it will be the way by which the Adamic race may return to God. During that reign the whole world will be assisted, succored and disciplined, that they may be encouraged to go to the very end of the way.

In the present time, the *only* way is dark, narrow, difficult; the light has not yet begun to shine for the *world*. The Scriptures represent the Church of Christ in this Gospel Age as saying, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet." In olden times men had little lanterns which they attached to the toes of their sandals, and as they walked each step would be in the light. So the Lord has been dealing with the Church during the Gospel Age. The narrow way has been *dark*; but we have had the "sure word of prophecy," which, as a lamp, shines on the pathway and will shine "more and more unto the perfect day."

When that day comes men will not need the *lamp*; for then there will be *sunlight*. *Then* the knowledge of God will *fill* the *whole earth*.

SACRIFICE ESSENTIAL TO DISCIPLESHIP

One of the narrowing features of this way is that at the present time no one is accepted of God unless he makes [R5055 : page 212] a *definite covenant* with God. If he does not choose to make that covenant he may think he is a Christian, but he is not. In the world

today four hundred million people are counted as Christians. Many have the idea that if they join the Church or do some good deed, they thus become followers of Christ. But the Bible very plainly states: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matt. 16:24.) This *self-denial* and *cross-bearing* is the sacrifice necessary to discipleship in Christ at the present time.

Many people are not Christians because they have not entered into a covenant with God. The Lord speaks of the class now called to discipleship, saying, "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice" – by a *complete consecration* of themselves; "Present your bodies living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, your reasonable service." (Psa. 50:5; Rom. 12:1.) If we have been accepted in Christ, if we have been begotten of the Holy Spirit, it is because we have entered at this strait gate and upon this narrow way, and have made this covenant of sacrifice to the Lord, giving our wills and all *earthly rights* to Him, that His will may be done in us.

After having entered this strait gate and narrow way, we should continue therein – not necessarily without *stumbling*, not necessarily without *making mistakes*; if we can *go on* ever so falteringly, to the best of our ability and with hearts loyal to the Lord, we shall be granted to sit on His throne – members of His Bride class.

THE CARES OF THIS WORLD OVERCOME MANY

As we are all aware the Bible shows that some who make this consecration, afterward become involved with the world, the cares of this life, and the deceitfulness of riches. These fail to carry out *their agreement*. Thus they are holding back the very price necessary to make them joint-heirs with our Lord. Whoever rejects the *cross* will not get the *crown*. How many people are overcharged with the cares of this life! How many people are being deluded by the deceitfulness of riches!

There was a gentleman with whom the writer was once very intimate; we were like brothers. One day he said, "Brother Russell, I should like very much indeed to be out in the Lord's work and to do some kind of service for the Truth, but I have a wife, and I understand that the Lord holds me responsible for the care of my wife. I could not think of going out and leaving her dependent. But if the Lord in His providence should ever send me money so that I could go without my wife's suffering any serious inconvenience, I would be very glad to go out and preach the Gospel." The Lord took him at his word. He was then a bookkeeper; but the Lord opened the way, by the death of a member of the firm, for him to become one of the principal partners in that firm. Without any effort at all he prospered financially until he was worth at least half a million dollars.

One day we said to him, "Brother, we have a very serious matter that weighs on us a great deal." He said, "Tell me what it is and I will assist you, whatever it costs." You see how gracious he was! He thought that we were after his *money!* Dear friends, we thank God that we have never yet found it necessary to ask for money; and we do not suppose that we ever shall. We said, "Brother, we are in great distress, and no one but you can help us." "Tell me what it is," he replied. We said, "Dear Brother, we desire to call your attention to something which you said several years ago when you were poor." Then we recited our previous conversation as best we could, and said, "The Lord has given you the money; He has done His part; are you ready to do yours?" With streaming eyes he answered, "Brother Russell, I am so bound to my business – hand and foot – that it would be impossible now." The cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches, according to his own words, had *bound him hand and foot*; but his heart was still loyal [R5056 : page 212] to God.

We have no desire to be his judge, but we are inclined to think that dear brother did not get into the Kingdom. While we do not know, yet we fear that his being bound "hand and foot" may have stood in his way, though we think that he was truly a child of God. Are we to

suppose that because he failed to make that sacrifice which he had agreed to make, he would go down into the Second Death? We hardly think so. We think that the Lord loved him and that he had a very loyal character. The Lord loves good characters. Our thought is that quite probably the dear brother will be in the Great Company; and we are very glad that there will be a Great Company class.

OUR HUMANITY MUST DIE

No one will get into the *Little Flock* class but those who faithfully lay down their lives in sacrifice to the end of the journey. God foreknew and predestinated that all who are of that class must be *copies of His dear Son*. If one is not a full copy of our Lord Jesus, if one has not left all to follow Him, then that one will not be of the Bride class.

The Scriptures mention two classes – the one as a Little Flock and the other as a Great Company – both parts of the "Church of the First-borns." In the type the priests were members of the tribe of Levi; but there were others of that tribe who were not priests. The Levites as a whole represent, we understand, the Church of the First-born ones who will attain the spirit plane of being, but who will form two classes, a "Little Flock" or priest class, and a "Great Company" or Levite class.

The voluntary sacrificing of the flesh is for one to give himself of his own free will to the Lord and to submit himself to the Lord Jesus as the great High Priest to carry out for him the work of sacrifice. What of those who make this *arrangement* and then fail to make the *sacrifice*? Their earthly life is consecrated; God has given them the Holy Spirit of adoption, and has accepted the arrangement whereby they gave up all their earthly rights. Such can never get the world's salvation. They voluntarily gave up all right to life on the human plane. When God gave them the Holy Spirit, He accepted the contract, binding on both sides. They will get the heavenly nature or *nothing*.

"DELIVERED OVER TO SATAN"

Those who do not go on to give themselves fully in sacrifice are delivered over to the Adversary to buffet them until their flesh shall be destroyed – until these earthly, clinging tendencies which were holding them from full loyalty to God are broken down and their minds become fully submissive and in harmony with God. That which they refused to give *voluntarily* will be *taken away* from them.

The only knowledge we have of this matter is from the Apostle's words. St. Paul, addressing the Church at Corinth, said that they had amongst them a brother who was not living according to his covenant, but who was living in a measure of sin. The Apostle reprimanded the Church for not having done their duty by the brother. Then said he, "I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed...to deliver [R5056 : page 213] such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." (I Cor. 5:3,5.) If the *flesh* is not *destroyed*, the *spirit* will not be *saved*, is the Apostle's argument.

This statement gives us an inkling of the Lord's will. In every case it is necessary that the flesh be destroyed. If the will is overcome by the flesh, the result will be the death of the *will* also; that is, the *Second Death*. But if the will desires to be in harmony with the Lord, then, although the enforced destruction of the flesh is not *sacrifice*, and such are not counted in with the *sacrificers*, yet they are saved "so as by fire" on the spirit plane, in the day of the Lord Jesus. – I Cor. 3:15.

Regarding the case that we have mentioned earlier in this article you might ask, Did that Brother lose the knowledge of the Truth? We will tell you; for this is a very interesting question.

In this Brother's case we do not know what were the sentiments of his heart, of course, for we are not able to judge those. But he left us and joined the Presbyterian Church. Then he joined the Christian

Alliance people and tried to believe in faith-healing and to practice it, although he had possessed much knowledge of the Truth along these lines. After pressing along the line of faith-healing, etc., he had several attacks of sickness and had to call in a doctor, notwithstanding faith-cures. Finally, after very serious illness lasting a number of weeks, he passed away. We do not know enough about him to say to what extent his mind was turned toward the Lord. We had no opportunity of knowing; for his attitude had more or less cut us off from our previous intimate fellowship.

Another case was called to our attention by a brother who asked us this very question – "Do you think this to be a case of what we might call '*the destruction of the flesh*'?" It seemed to us that it was such a case. We cite it:

A brother living in a certain city received the Truth and rejoiced in it greatly. He found another brother, with whom he liked to meet and talk about the glad message. He seemed to show the right spirit, just ready for the Truth, and it was satisfying to his heart. But his wife was very indignant. She opposed him saying, "Choose between your religion and me; you cannot have both." She put the matter very squarely before him; and he chose his wife. It was only a little while afterwards, as the story came to us, that apparently the Lord put the poor brother where he was very sorry for his choice. He contracted some kind of loathsome disease, and in the midst of his terrible suffering his wife deserted him.

We hope that the Lord did not desert him and that eventually he was forgiven by the Lord; for it looked as if the Lord had taken that brother at his own proposition; that he was really a child of God, but not of the overcoming class. He loved his wife more than the Lord and was not worthy to be a member of the Bride class. So apparently he suffered such *entire destruction* of the flesh as he probably never expected to know. He must have loved his wife a great deal to give the Lord up for her.

Yet she deserted him at a time of great need! Even from the standpoint of the world it would seem wrong for a wife to leave her husband under those conditions. We may readily suppose that the brother came back to the Lord at the closing hours, learning his lesson well, and perhaps making certain promises to the Lord. If so we doubt not that his spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

