

BIBLE PARADOXES

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this book is to explain some of the difficult statements of the Scriptures which, on the surface, may seem like contradictions; but when rightly understood these are revelations of spiritual truths of vital import for godly living and constitute an important part of the plan of redemption. The inexhaustible mine of Scriptural truth gives up its beautiful gems only to those who diligently search for them as for hid treasure, and who are willing to make any sacrifice in order to obtain the “pearl of great price.” Jesus thanked the Father that He had concealed truths from those who were “wise and prudent” in their own estimation, and had “revealed them unto babes,” or those who are humble and are conscious of their need of more knowledge and experience.

Increased knowledge of any kind is naturally concealed from those who feel that they are already “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” The center and substance of all truth is Christ, who is declared to be “the truth,” and “The Word of God.” He is truth incarnate, for in Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” He is “the Light of the world,” and “the Sun of Righteousness,” and from Him has shined every ray of light that has illuminated the pathway of man in all ages. The name of the last book of the Bible is “The Revelation of Jesus Christ,” and this could be appropriately applied to the entire Old and New Testaments, for their chief purpose is to reveal Him.

In the parabolic and paradoxical portions of Scripture, Christ and the gospel are presented in a form that veils light from the indolent and self-satisfied, and unveils it to those who are diligent and spiritual and whose souls long for more knowledge and experience in spiritual things. Truths that may even seem foolishness to one class are sublime and glorious to the other “because they are spiritually discerned.” Of such are the paradoxes of the Bible, and this book is being sent forth with the hope and prayer that it will whet the spiritual appetites of the readers and lead to a more devoted study of the Scriptures so that to them “the path of the just” may indeed be a “shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.”

THE AUTHOR.

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Chapter 1 – The Lionlike Lamb

In the Scriptures more than two hundred names, emblems, and symbols are used to describe the character and mission of Jesus. This gives meaning to the statement of the prophet Isaiah that the Messiah's "name shall be called Wonderful." One of the most prominent and important of these symbolic names is the Lamb. From the gates of the Garden of Eden to Calvary, the fallen sons and daughters of Adam demonstrated their faith in the plan of redemption by offering the typical lamb, through which they beheld "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

More than sixty years after the crucifixion and ascension of Jesus, John declared the Saviour to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" and the book containing the names of the redeemed of all ages is called "the book of life of the Lamb." Twenty-nine times in the book of the Revelation, Jesus is spoken of as the Lamb. In chapter 5 the Eternal is pictured on His throne with a book in His right hand sealed with seven seals. The challenge of the mighty angel to the inhabitants of the universe is met with profound silence because no creature is able to take the book, break its seals, and reveal its contents.

This failure caused the prophet to weep until he was assured that "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" had prevailed or conquered and was therefore able "to open the book, and to lose the seven seals thereof." The apostle was told to behold the Lion, but when He looked He saw a Lamb which appeared as if it "had been slain." It was "a Lamb standing as if killed," which "seemed to have been sacrificed," or "He looked as if He had been offered in sacrifice," according to other translations. In the heavenly sanctuary Jesus is both the Priest and the Victim, or Sacrifice; the Lamb whose spilled blood is offered as a propitiation for sin.

Here Jesus is pictured as both a Lion and a Lamb. This constitutes one of the many strange paradoxes of the Bible; for what could be more opposite in nature, appearance, and characteristics? Both of these symbols are necessary to gain a proper vision of the Christ. A paradox is a statement which appears to be contradictory and seemingly says two different things which may even sound absurd, but which is nevertheless true and often sublime.

No creature could possibly better represent meekness, humility, and innocence than does a lamb. Lambs are never forward and aggressive, nor do they fight for their rights. They do not retaliate or seek revenge. In prophetic vision the prophet said of the Christ: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." Isaiah 53:6, 7. Speaking of the events which fulfilled this prophecy, the apostle Peter said: "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." 1 Peter 2:23.

Speaking of the unjust trial of Jesus before the Hebrew tribunal, Giovanni Rosadi, the Italian advocate, said: "The condemnation had already been decided upon before the trial... Jesus knew it, and disdained to reply to what was advanced in the first place because it was false; what was advanced in the second place He of His own accord and freely admitted, because in its material basis it was true. When a false and unjust charge was brought against Him, He held His peace, and He answered when no proof, not even a false one, constrained Him to speak. Novel and sublime behavior this, indeed, on the part of a prisoner at the bar!" — *The Trial of Jesus*, page 180.

On the other hand, no creature better symbolizes courage, boldness, and fearlessness than does a lion, and these, too, were characteristic of Jesus. He was the bravest of the brave, and was afraid of neither wicked men nor devils. He unflinchingly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for

their hypocrisy, and called them “fools,” “hypocrites,” and “blind guides.” He likened them to “serpents” and “whited sepulchers” and “a generation of vipers.” Witness Him cleansing the temple of its unholy traffic, overturning the tables of the greedy money-changers, and driving out all who were making His Father’s house a “house of merchandise” and “a den of thieves.” In the light of His words and conduct on this and other occasions, how could any person accuse Him of being a coward, a politician, or a policy man?

Genuine meekness is in no wise related to timidity. It is not another name for fear, anxiety, weakness, or cowardice. The truly meek are the truly brave and strong. They alone can be calm and composed in the time of stress and strain. It was because Jesus possessed both meekness and courage to such and unusual degree that He is symbolized by both at lamb and a Lion.

One writer has described this combination of humility and holy boldness in these words: “No man can be divinely meek unless within himself he knows that every act harmonizes with God’s law. He can thus meet every obstacle.... The weakling becomes very much incensed over little things.... A man of that kind never can be meek, because he is so easily stirred up. He has not the character to be meek. One who knows he is one with God does not permit such trivialities to bother him.... One who is living at perfect peace with himself, who has the mastery of his own emotions and control of his affairs and circumstances, can afford to be meek.... The tongue of slander will not hurt him, because he knows that in the end all falsities must return to nothingness from whence they came; that they have no reality, therefore they cannot hurt him.... After all, God needs no defense.” —*God’s Business*, February, 1935.

This was true of Jesus. He was too great to be affected by insults and offenses, and too busy to be turned from His high and noble purpose by things of little consequence. He was the meekest of the meek, the greatest of the great, the strongest of the strong, and the bravest of the brave. Here is a beautiful tribute to the Lamb who was also the Lion: “A man is weak who is only passive, and weak when he is only militant;... he is strong

only as he is passively militant and militantly passive, and Christ was both. I love the Christ of the blazing eye and the blessing hand, tender, terrible Prophet pronouncing woes over the city and then weeping over it. I love the Christ that let the storm of His redeeming fury loose upon a nation and then let the returning storm beat upon Himself on a cross to complete the redemption. I drink of the life of the Christ that loved enough to hate the evil that destroys those whom He loves —I drink of it and am strong.” —E. Stanley Jones, *Christ at the Round Table*, page 228.

The purpose of the gospel is to make us like Him who is “altogether lovely” and “the chiefest among ten thousand.” The object of His mediatorial ministry in “the sanctuary of strength” is to make us strong. But “strength is made perfect in weakness,” declared the apostle Paul, “for when I am weak, then am I strong.” The recognition of weakness is the source of humility and therefore the secret of true strength in character development. Therefore the blending of the characteristics of the lamb and the Lion is the secret of spiritual growth which reaches “mature manhood and the stature of full-grown men in Christ.” Ephesians 4:13, Weymouth.

Chapter 2 – When Weakness is Strength

The Scriptures contain more paradoxes than does any other literature. One of these is the statement of the apostle Paul recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Here are two paradoxical statements which are closely related: “My strength is made perfect in weakness,” or, “Power matures in weakness” (Weymouth), and “When I am weak, then am I strong,” or, “I am strong just when I am weak” (Moffatt). These are strange statements, especially in the light of human reasoning. Mankind under the reign of sin has never considered weakness strength or strength weakness. Evidently there are many things which the world esteems as weakness which are really strong, and other things which are considered strong are very weak when viewed in their proper perspective.

Also what the world considers as wisdom is often foolishness, and vice versa. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, which boasted of its wisdom: “Because that which the world deems foolish in God is wiser than men’s wisdom, and that which it deems feeble in God is mightier than men’s might. For consider, brethren, God’s call to you. Not many who are wise with merely human wisdom, not many of position and

influence, not many of noble birth have been called. But God has chosen the things which the world regards as foolish, in order to put its wise men to shame.” 1 Corinthians 1:25-27, Weymouth, third edition.

In the diary of Joseph Goebbels, one of Hitler’s lieutenants, were found two or three references to Gandhi that are not very complimentary. He declared that the method of nonresistance was weak and doomed to failure, that it could never secure the independence of India. In contrast, he said that the military might of Germany would bring world peace through world rulership. The testimony of history demonstrates the foolishness of his philosophy.

When Pierre Laval of France urged Stalin to cease his antagonism to the pope for his own good, the Russian leader answered by asking, “How many divisions does he have?” Napoleon Bonaparte once said: “Victory is on the side of the strongest battalions.” In answer to this someone said that the Lord took a flake of snow, a drop of rain, and an onion, and with these disproved his statement, humbled his pride, and sent him into exile. The snows of a Russian winter, on the eve of the battle of Waterloo, a rainstorm which caused his artillery to bog down, and a fried-onion supper that disturbed his sleep and clouded his mind so that it refused to function with its usual clarity—all contributed to the ending of his military career.

A Chinese Christian leader said that “when God is involved, the battles of the centuries are not necessarily won with chariots.” That which Hitler thought made him strong proved to be the source of his greatest weakness. The statement of Jesus to Peter that “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” has been demonstrated in the history of the great empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, and in scores of lesser nations in more modern times. It has never been the belief of rulers or nations that strength matures in weakness.

“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,” is wise counsel for men and nations. This is because the person who thinks he is strong does not know his weakness. Samson, who thought he was too strong physically to be overcome, fell before the cunning designs of a

morally weak woman, as have millions since. He lost his morals, his physical strength, and his vision. Tennyson set forth the secret of true strength when he put these words in the mouth of Sir Galahad:

My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.

After Michael the Prince defeated the mighty Lucifer in the battle in heaven, the defeated one came to earth. Jesus Christ, clothed in human flesh as a babe, came to earth and defeated “the dragon.” The church militant is represented, not as a great giant, but as a woman; yet she appears to her enemies as “terrible as an army with banners,” and goes forth “conquering, and to conquer.” The church has been weak when it has depended on numbers, wealth prestige, and political connections; it has been the strongest in times of unpopularity, persecution, and apparent weakness.

Individual Christians have always been the strongest spiritually when they most fully recognize their weakness and their need of divine power. Saul of Tarsus felt strong as he left Jerusalem for Damascus with the authority from the chief priests to imprison Christians and destroy Christianity; but a vision of Jesus changed him into another man. He arrived at his destination a humble and contrite penitent who felt that he was the “chief” of sinners and the weakest of the weak. All was changed so that what he once loved he now hated, and what he once hated he now loved. He had learned from experience that “strength is made perfect in weakness,” and that a man is strong only when he recognizes his weakness. This lesson he never forgot. It was the secret of his unparalleled success as the apostle to the Gentiles.

This same principle is expressed by Jesus in the first of the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is not the approval of heaven on those who are poor-spirited, but rather upon those who recognize their spiritual poverty. The

members of the church of the Laodiceans are described as feeling that they are “rich, and increased with goods,” and in need of nothing, when in the estimation of Christ they are at the same time spiritually “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” and in need of all that He longs to give them. Because they imagine they are strong, they are very weak. To pretend to possess what we do not have indicates either delusion or insanity.

We need to say with Paul, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” This is the vision and experience that is essential in the church today.

Chapter 3 – When Gain is Loss

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.” Matthew 10:39. This is one of the paradoxical sayings of Jesus which He repeated in various ways at least six times. “To save your life is to lose it, and to lose your life for My sake is to save it” is the Weymouth translation.

Jesus is speaking of life in a double sense and is contrasting the relative value of the lower and higher life, the natural and the spiritual, the temporal and the eternal. On another occasion He said: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” John 12:24,25. This is the self-operating law of reproduction in the world of nature. In order to preserve and increase seed it must be lost in the ground so that it can be found again in a multiplied harvest.

In the face of coming persecution and martyrdom, Jesus warned His disciples against attempting to save their lives by compromising principle at the expense of a clear conscience. Tertullian tells us that heathen judges tried to persuade Christians to renounce their faith with the appeal, “Save your life,” or “Do not throw away your life.” Those who neglect or sacrifice spiritual interests for the sake of temporary gain, and those who neglect or sacrifice spiritual interests for the sake of temporary gain, and those who deny the Lord in order to escape ridicule, persecution, or martyrdom, will lose all they seek to gain in this life and the next.

Our text has been interpreted to mean: “He that findeth the life of external comfort and pleasure shall lose the spiritual life of eternal joy.” After quoting the proverbial saying under consideration, Jesus said: “For

what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26. "Life," and not "soul," is the proper rendering in both verses, and is thus translated in modern translations. To gain this world is to lose the next. Every individual must choose between the two, for no one can have both.

The story is told of a renowned scholar on vacation in a cottage beside a large lake in the mountains. He hired a native of the country to act as guide to row his boat. On one occasion as he sat in the stern facing the oarsman, he began to feel sorry for him and asked about his education and opportunities in life. Each question was answered by a shake of the head, to which the professor remarked: "Then you have lost half of your life." The boatman was looking anxiously past his guest at the horizon where a storm was gathering, and he was bending his efforts to reach the farther shore before it broke on the lake. When he realized that he would lose the race, he said to his proud and self-satisfied companion, "Can you swim?" When the scholar answered in the negative, the man at the oars said: "Then you have lost all your life."

Character should be the chief quest of life. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." The spirit of the world is to get, to win, to gain, to grasp, and to hold. But he gains most who gives most, and therefore "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Knowledge is best gained and retained by sharing. "The liberal soul shall be made fat" is a Biblical expression emphasizing this principle. The mighty Lucifer attempted to grasp a position of equality with his Maker, and he lost his own high official position as an anointed covering cherub before the throne of the Eternal. On the other hand, Michael, whose place the angel tried to seize, humbled Himself to a position even below the angels by clothing Himself in sinful human flesh; and as a consequence He has been highly exalted above every name in heaven and earth. See Isaiah 14:12-17; Philippians 2:5-11.

Commenting on our text, Gains S. Dobbins said: "To gain life, one must lose it. Life will be lost by him who seeks to find. To keep life, it must be hated. Life springs from death. All of these sayings sum up to

mean that self-realization comes only through self-sacrifice. The getting life is the losing life, the giving life is the winning life. The life of self-seeking is the empty life: the life of self-giving is the full life. The principle holds good everywhere—in the family, in the community, in business, in society, in politics, in the church, in every relationship of life. It is the simplest and yet the most profound philosophy of creative living ever enunciated. It is a core about which all life may be safely gathered. It is a law which, if violated, will bring inevitable ruin.” —*Evangelism According to Christ*, page 113.

The Dead Sea has often been cited as an example of that which is ever receiving and never giving, but this is really not the case. While this sea receives approximately seven million tons of fresh water each day from the river Jordan and its tributaries, it does not have an outlet because it is 1,300 feet below sea level; however, it makes its contribution through the process of evaporation. By this means most of the rainfall of that region is made possible, as well as the vegetation and life of man. The perpetual snows of Mount Hermon and the waters of the river Jordan owe their being to the heavy evaporation of the Dead Sea. From this sea are extracted great quantities of such valuable materials as potash, calcium, chlorides, bromides, and salt, which are being sent forth to bless mankind. This sea gives away the fabulous wealth it has received.

It is sometimes said of a person, “He has never found himself,” which means that he has missed the mark and failed in life. When the prodigal son “came to himself” in a far country as the result of his destitution, he found himself as well as the way back to his father and his God. When he tried to save his life for himself alone he lost everything, including his manhood; but then when he began to hate his life he found it again in a richer and more complete form.

There are only two roads for travelers, and they lead to widely separated destinations. One is a strait, narrow, and restricted way of self-sacrifice and self-discipline, and “few there be that find it.” The other is a broad, easy, liberal road of selfish interests and ease-loving pleasure, and “many there be which go in there at.” To travel the way of life one must

crucify “the flesh.” Real life requires sacrifice and surgery. The lower nature with the “works of the flesh” must be amputated in order that the beautiful “fruit of the Spirit” may be manifested. The latter can be gained only when the first are lost. Like Christ, we must love righteousness and hate iniquity. It is necessary to lose the old life in order to find the new.

Thus the words of the Master Teacher come ringing down to us through the ages, “He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it,” and never was the statement more true and significant than in the selfish, greedy, grasping, and covetous generation in which we live.

Chapter 4 – When Wisdom is Concealed

One of the strangest prayers ever offered is recorded in Matthew 11:25: “At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” “I praise Thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding all this from the wise and learned and revealing it to the simple-minded” is the Moffatt translation.

Luke’s record of this strange prayer is: “On that same occasion Jesus was filled by the Holy Spirit with rapturous joy. ‘I give Thee fervent thanks,’ He exclaimed, ‘O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from sages and men of understanding, and hast revealed them to babes. Yes, Father, for such has been Thy gracious will.’” Luke 10:21, Weymouth.

“At that time” and “in that hour” have reference to what had just taken place. The seventy had just returned from a successful mission, and with enthusiasm they had rendered a glowing report of their success. Even the devils had been subject to them through the name of Christ. The master mildly and tactfully rebuked them for rejoicing more over the fact that they had the power to cast out evil spirits, than because their names were enrolled in the book of life. Here is a lesson for those who place so much stress upon miracles. Jesus taught that the assurance of personal salvation is far more important.

In His prayer, Jesus was reflecting on the sad results of the rejection of His message. He had pronounced a woe on the cities of Judea in which most of His mighty works had been performed, and He declared that it would be more tolerable in the judgment for the wicked heathen cities of

Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom than for them. As He was completing His severe denunciations of the rejectors of light, the seventy arrived and with unbounded enthusiasm and exuberant joy began reporting the success of their adventuring for Christ. This account of the results of the first missionary venture of the disciples lifted the spirit of Jesus and filled Him with “rapturous joy.” Simple-minded and unschooled fishermen and farmers had accomplished what the learned scribes and Pharisees were unable to do. It was a forecast of the final triumph of Christianity.

“The wise and learned” leaders of the Jews felt sorry for the common people who did not know the law, and they looked upon them as “babes” in knowledge and experience. Like some modern religious leaders, they felt that they alone were capable of understanding and interpreting the divine will, and that others should not attempt to comprehend the Scriptures. These leaders “rejected the counsel of God” and spurned the teaching of Him who is “infinite in wisdom.” Because Jesus had not attended the school of the rabbis, He, too, was considered by the scribes and Pharisees as unlearned. These haughty leaders were so steeped in their prejudices, traditions, and preconceived opinions that they were blind to “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”

The prayer of the Pharisee in the temple represented the feeling of his class and, to a great degree, of the whole nation. Believing that they were spiritually whole, they had no need of a physician, and were therefore not healed of the deadly malady of sin. They were wise in their own conceits, and were greatly in need of the counsel given by the apostle Paul for a person “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think,” because “if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.” Romans 12:3; 1 Corinthians 8:2.

The pride of knowledge is the veil that conceals light and truth. The apostle Paul wrote: “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto

him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 1:19, 20; 2:14. Spiritual things are not arbitrarily concealed from the wise. Jesus longed to tell them eternal truths as He had told Nicodemus and Joseph. During the outpouring of the Holy Spirit following Pentecost, “a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Acts 6:7.

Jesus said that the truth which would be concealed from the wise and prudent in their own estimation, would be “revealed unto babes,” a term used by the Jews to describe the unlearned. In the estimation of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus and His disciples belonged to this class. The Master had declared that all who come to Him must come as ‘little children’ if they would be saved: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” See Matthew 18:1-3. Childlike humility, meekness, and eagerness to learn are essential to increased knowledge and eventual salvation. Pride and a superiority complex effectually close the road to character development as well as denying access to heaven to the individual. The greatest scholar has barely touched the fringes of any subject and knows only “in part.”

True genius has been defined as “the heart of childhood taken up and matured into the power of manhood.” We are told that the common people heard Jesus gladly and were “very attentive to hear Him.” The head of a department in a medical college testified that he had learned through experience to approach his branch of medical science with a critical and inquiring attitude because the knowledge thus far gained on that subject was partial and therefore no one had spoken or could speak with the voice of finality or authority. And when he approached God and His Inspired Word he did so with the attitude of a little child asking questions of his parents. Trust and confidence dispelled all doubts, and a new spiritual experience had filled his heart with joy and peace. His reverent attitude made it possible for the God of wisdom to open to him the great storehouse of heaven.

These days of marvelous scientific discoveries indicate that there are still vast oceans of undiscovered truth which should lessen man's pride and ego. In the physical universe what was once believed to be solid matter or a stationary mass is now known to be ever-moving and whirling energy with unlimited explosive power. Whether electrons be moving particles or waves makes but little difference, for everything is in motion, and the evidence is overwhelming that science has only begun to reveal the secrets of the natural world. We must therefore beware lest we become fossilized in our thinking along any line, even religion. As in Christ's day, there is altogether too much of what has been called "frozen theology" and "mummified religion." This is what led the Jewish prelates to reject and crucify their own Messiah, who attempted to inject a new element into their religion. The secrets of the kingdom of heaven still belong to those who are childlike in their desire for information and knowledge.

Chapter 5 – When Right is Wrong

All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient,” is one saying of the apostle Paul which is believed to be proverbial. “Everything is allowable to me, but not everything is profitable,” is the Weymouth translation. “Not all things are helpful” and “not all are good for me” are other versions. Later in the same letter the apostle repeated the statement and added, “but all things edify not.” “Not all things build up,” is the Revised Standard Version. See 1 Corinthians 6:12; 10:23.

This statement is not only proverbial, but is also paradoxical. Not only the Scriptures, but life itself contains many paradoxes. Even in the everyday experiences of life there are workings and counterworkings which seem to be contradictory. Men must sometimes lose in order to win, stoop in order to conquer, serve in order to rule, become weak in order to become strong, suffer in order to be happy, experience poverty in order to be rich, deny self in order to succeed, and surrender in order to gain the victory. Life is like that —especially the Christian life.

The “all things” mentioned in our text cannot include the sins condemned by Paul in the previous verses, which are unlawful for any man at any time. Nothing can be lawful which is a violation of the principles set forth in the moral law. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. “All unrighteousness is sin,” is another Biblical statement. Nothing can be lawful that is unrighteous by nature. In some things the distinction between right and wrong is absolute, certain, unchangeable. The Ten Commandment law is the standard of righteousness, or rightdoing and right conduct, and will therefore be the rule in the final judgment.

But there are other things in which the question of right and wrong depends on circumstances, and it is of this class that the apostle is writing. Some things are right, lawful, and permissible in themselves which are not best or expedient under certain conditions, and therefore to do them would be wrong. There is often a vast difference between doing what we have a right to do, and doing what we ought to do. In his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A. T. Robertson said: "Many things, harmless in themselves in the abstract, do harm to others in the concrete. We live in a world of social relations that circumscribe personal rights and liberties."

Liberty should never be made an excuse for license, and of this it seems that some of the Corinthian believers were guilty even to the extent of moral laxity. Paul warned them: "Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak." 1 Corinthians 8:9. Similar instruction was given by another apostle: "As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God." 1 Peter 2:16. Even those things which are right and innocent should not be done by Christians if it would cause others to stumble or fall. "He alone does not fall into unlawful things who sometimes abstains by way of caution even from lawful ones," said Augustine. Personal liberty can be carried to extremes so as to circumscribe the rights and privileges of others. Many things are dearer to genuine Christians than are mere rights, even though they be within the realm of law. The maintenance of a clear conscience is more basic than freedom.

There are times when a court of law cannot administer justice because of legal restrictions, and to give the needed relief the case must be settled in a court of equity. Equity is defined as "the application of principles of right and justice to the legal adjustment of differences where the law, by reason of its universality, is deficient." The Christian religion is made up largely of basic principles which leave many questions to the exercise of individual judgment. Every act of life is not regulated by fixed rules of law. In fact, we are told that against some things "there is no law," and Christians must therefore follow an enlightened conscience without

insisting on their own rights on the basis of legality. Here was where the Pharisees failed. Jesus said: "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20. In this respect God can make no exception. It is not always a question of what we *may* do, but rather what we *ought* to do, not what is *lawful*, but what is *expedient*.

Again Paul said: "Ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another." Galatians 5:13. Genuine love will ensure the right decision, for 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' Those who are constrained by love will practice the golden rule and meet all the demands of the second table of the Decalogue by loving others as much as they love themselves. Love will take care of those things which, though lawful, are not expedient. Expediency is never arbitrary and unreasonable in its demands. It regulates our tastes and desires by considering the best interests of our fellow men. It sees that personal liberty does not invade the rights and privileges of our neighbors.

While the liberty which comes with the gospel is very broad, it is confined within the eternal principles of the Decalogue, which is called "the law of liberty," and whose precepts are declared to be "exceeding broad," embracing "the whole duty of man." "Obedience to law is liberty," is a well-known saying, and the psalmist said: "I will walk at liberty: for I seek Thy precepts." Nothing is expedient that is unlawful; but even within the limits of the lawful the end does not always justify the means. Under some conditions, proper means may lead to undesirable ends. Christians must carefully select the expedient from among the things that are lawful, and be always ready to say, "I may, but I will not," or, "I have a right to do it, but for the sake of those involved I will not do it." This is Christianity.

It is wise to follow the counsel given in Philippians 4:8 and seek the things that are true, honest, just, pure, and lovely, rather than insist on a strict adherence to that which is lawful or allowable. The spirit of the Master led Him to pay the tribute money even though He was free from

that obligation, but He did it, He said, “lest we should offend them.” Matthew 17:27. The same spirit will go the second mile in service and give the “cloak also” in sacrifice. Paul could rightly have demanded the compensation which is due those who preach the gospel, but because of the circumstances existing in the mission field he felt that it would be wrong to insist upon his rights. See 1 Corinthians 9:14-22. The older brother in the parable of the prodigal son insisted on his own rights, when he was wrong. The question is not, “What are my rights?” but, rather, “What are my obligations as a Christian?” Sometimes when we are sure we are right we may be wrong, for “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Proverbs 14:12.

There is an old saying, “Unlawful things ruin thousands, lawful things (unlawfully used), ten thousands.” Someone has truthfully said: “Nowhere does the devil build his little chapels more cunningly than right by the side of the temple of Christian liberty.” In determining what is expedient within the lawful we should ask ourselves the questions, “What effect will it have on me and on my liberty, and on my neighbor and his liberty? How will it appear in the sight of God, and will it redound to His glory?” There will be safety in following the counsel given in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Obedience to this principle will settle the questions as to what is not expedient though lawful, and lead to equitable decisions as to when right is wrong.

Chapter 6 – When to Have is to Have Not

One of the strangest of the sayings of Jesus is found in Matthew 13:12: “For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.” Since this statement at first thought seems harsh and unjust, it is well for us to examine it carefully. Perhaps its puzzling nature is at least partially explained in the preceding verse and in the one which follows: “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.”

Further light is thrown upon the meaning of these statements in another admonition given by Jesus and recorded in Luke 8:18: “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have,” or, “thinketh that he hath,” according to the marginal reading. “Even what he thinks that he has will be taken away” is the reading in the Revised Standard Version. What we merely think that we possess is not really ours. In this text “hath” and “seemeth to have,” or “thinketh that he hath,” are the same. It both *is* and *is not* his at the same time.

It is usually true that those who do not make use of what they have, eventually lose what they have or think they have. This is illustrated in the parable of the talents. The man who refused to make use of the one talent he had, lost it, and those who shared theirs in service were blessed with a double portion in the end. Rewards are determined by the use of talents rather than by mere possession. Aristotle put it this way: “He who hath this or that and makes no use of it, may not improperly be said both to have it and not have it.” This may indicate that the statement of Jesus was proverbial. Dry den, the poet, wrote:

'Tis true, poor Codrus *nothing* had to boast,
And yet, poor Codrus *all* that nothing lost.

In all ages the diligent have gathered what is lost by the idle. If all earthly possessions were divided equally, in a short time they would again be in the hands of the few. Demosthenes said: "The possessions of the negligent belong of right to those who endure toil and hunger." Christ's statement is the law of life, the verdict of experience in every realm. The miser does not really possess his gold, he only thinks he has it. His hoarding answers to no purpose which gives it any value. Moth-eaten garments and corroded gold and silver bring the condemnation of heaven upon the selfish wealthy of the last days who heap it up for their own pleasure. See James 5:1-3. They have, and yet they have not, because they fail to use it to bless others. It therefore becomes so worthless that they eventually cast it "to the moles and to the bats." See Isaiah 2:19-21.

Do earthly possessions depend wholly on a legal title, a strongbox in the bank, or burial in the earth? The man who hid his talent in the earth did not really have it. Because he did not use it according to its purpose, he lost it to the more wise and diligent. This is also true in a physical sense. Muscles are strengthened only by use, by exercise. Failure to make use of physical powers produces weakness and eventual loss. The limb unused loses its power and becomes useless. It may still be fastened to the body, but at the same time the person does not possess it for the purpose for which it was created. The fish living in the impenetrable darkness of Mammoth Cave have no use for eyes, so they are blind.

The same is true intellectually. Unused knowledge is of no value to one's self or to others. In this respect we have only what we use, and have not that which we fail to share with others. It has been said, "Obedience is the gateway to knowledge;" and it is just as true that sharing is the secret of knowledge. The intellect grows by exercise. The man with the five talents is rewarded with more, because of his diligent use of them. The first five were gifts, but the second five were the reward of industry. Even the physical senses which are not used become dulled. Careful attention to

music and art and literature increases the capacity for both appreciation and knowledge. This is the unalterable law of nature.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. One writer called Christ's paradoxical statement, "The law of spiritual capital." Spiritual grace and power are developed by exercise. Virtues strengthen by use and weaken by neglect. This is true of all habits, whether good or bad. It is the principle operating everywhere that he who shares what he values is rewarded by its increase, and he who hoards it for his own selfish use will eventually lose it. Every measure of grace is given chiefly for the benefit of others, and the same is true of faith, hope, and love. God blesses us that we might be a blessing. Love bestowed brings love in return, and the person who does not love becomes both loveless and unloved.

The spiritually diligent are rewarded with deepening spirituality, and the selfish and indolent lose even the experience they may have had. The consistent Christian and diligent missionary lay up treasure in heaven in souls saved, while the unconsecrated lose even what they think they have. This is strikingly illustrated in the message of Christ to the church of the Laodiceans, which represents present-day Christianity in general. He accuses them of boasting, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," while in reality they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" in spiritual things. They think they have, while being destitute of that of which they boast.

Therefore it is the "haves" who receive more, and the "have-nots" who lose what they have or think they have. In this respect Christianity is beautifully summed up in the statement of Jesus recorded in Luke 6:38 (Weymouth): "Give, and gifts shall be bestowed on you. Full measure, pressed, shaken down, and running over, shall they pour into your laps; for with the same measure that ye use they shall measure to you in return." This is genuine religion. It is Christianity in action.

Chapter 7 – When Fear is a Virtue

Someone has said: “Fear, worry, and anxiety are the greatest single trinity of evils.” Jesus declared that fear would grip humanity in the last days and would therefore constitute one of the signs of His return. His disciples once questioned: “What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?” He said: “There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.” Luke 21:25-28.

“Nations will be in dismay, bewildered at the roar of sea and waves, men swooning with panic and foreboding of what is to befall the universe” is Moffatt’s translation. “On earth anguish among the nations in their bewilderment at the roaring of the sea and its billows; while men’s hearts are fainting for fear, and for anxious expectation of what is coming on the world” is Weymouth’s rendering.

A noted writer recently said: “The great scourge of mankind is not war, though it is frequently referred to as such. It is something more fundamental —something that plays its part in producing wars. It is fear —an emotion tremendously devastating to human personality.”

There is nothing more disruptive and paralyzing than haunting fear. The psalmist said: “Fret not —it only leads to evil.” Psalm 37:8, Moffatt. And Jesus declared that life is often “choked with worries.” Luke 8:14, Moffatt. Fear is now known to be one of the chief causes of disease. A

physician recently said, “Fears are the most disruptive thing we can have.” This is also indicated in Ecclesiastes 11:10: “Banish all worries from your mind, and keep your body free from pain.” (Moffatt.) Job said: “The thing which I greatly feared is come upon me,” and that is usually true. What we worry about is likely to happen. Fear is the result of a lack of faith and love. We are told that “he that feareth is not made perfect in love.” 1 John 4:18. But there is deliverance in the Lord. The psalmist said: “I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” Psalm 34:4. There is no other remedy.

But there is another kind of fear which is healthy and virtuous, because it produces zeal, ambition, and energy. It is creative, constructive, and productive, and is absolutely essential to growth and progress in any line. The fear of disease and death account for the phenomenal success of modern medical science, and produces the chief incentive for obedience to the laws of our being, even at the expense of effort and sacrifice. The fear of being ignorant and mediocre is the motive power of study and research and educational progress. The fear of poverty and starvation impels the human family to toil and sweat in order to obtain a livelihood and to secure the comforts and pleasures of life. The fear of war and of its terrible consequences has led to noble efforts to outlaw mass murder and to bring peace to a war-weary world.

There is also a form of fear which is akin to awe and reverence for the Supreme Being and for holy things, and which is necessary to salvation. This kind of fear has no relation to fright, dread, or terror. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding.” Proverbs 9:10. “The first thing in knowledge is reverence for the Eternal, to know the Deity is what knowledge means” is the Moffatt translation. This kind of fear is basic in true education. Said the psalmist: “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him.” Psalm 89:7. We are admonished to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” Hebrews 12:28.

The wise man declared that “the conclusion of the whole matter of life and conduct is: “Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. God’s last warning message is to be heralded to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:6, 7. In this disrespectful and irreverent age the kind of fear described in these texts is not only greatly needed, but is absolutely necessary to success and redemption.

The same God who says, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isaiah 41:10), also says to every human being, “Fear God, and give glory to Him.” There is no contradiction in this paradox. The Christian has no difficulty in obeying both commands. His religion makes him calm, serene, poised, and restful under all conditions. He does not fret or worry, because he knows that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Romans 8:28. But the Christian at the same time fears God and reverences His name and word. He is controlled by godly fear, which produces obedience. He marvels at the immeasurable love and indescribable grace of God which was demonstrated on the cross of Calvary, and he is filled with amazement and wonder, admiration and astonishment. The plan of salvation is to him “the mystery of godliness.”

May we all know more of the fear that builds and creates, constructs and regenerates, and less and less of that which frustrates, disrupts, and destroys. Then we will know by experience the peace and tranquility described by the ancient prophet: “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure

dwelling, and in quiet resting places.” “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.” Isaiah 32:17, 18; 54:13.

Chapter 8 – When Losing is Saving

He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.” Matthew 10:39. This moral truism is a paradox, a strange calculation in regard to profit and loss, with the soul on one side of the balance and the world on the other. This is a profound saying of Jesus which He repeated several times. See Matthew 16:24-26; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24.

“Remember Lot’s wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.” Luke 17:32, 33. The proverbial saying is here given as an illustration of the experience of Lot’s wife in losing her life as well as all her possessions in Sodom. The language is different in John 12:25: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” “He who holds his life dear, is destroying it; and he who makes his life of no account in this world shall keep it to the life of the ages” is the Weymouth translation, and “He who loves his life loses it, and he who cares not for his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life” is the Moffatt translation.

“Life” as used here is equivalent to “self.” To be enriched by giving and to gain by losing is indeed strange, but it is illustrated in nature as set forth in verse 24: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Death is a strange road to life, yet in nature dissolution is often often necessary to reproduction. The seed must die or dissolve in order to bring forth a harvest. “If you keep your seed, you lose it; if you sow it, you will find it again,” is an old saying. “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days,” is a Scriptural statement illustrating this principle. Ecclesiastes 11:1. The seed is apparently thrown

away and lost in the soil, but it is the only way in which it can be found again in a more abundant measure. Even the falling and decaying leaves enrich the soil and thus increase future production.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. The lower nature must be sacrificed in order to gain the higher. This life must be lost in order to obtain the life that is more abundant. Those who refuse to give up the one to gain the other will eventually lose both. Self-renunciation is the law of self-preservation. Jesus applied our text to His own life. If there had been no crucifixion, there could have been no resurrection, and hence no salvation. He kept His life by surrendering to death; and eternal life is ours only on the basis of being crucified with Christ. Paul declared that he entered into life by being crucified with Jesus, which made it possible for Christ to dwell in him. By this means the world was dead to the apostle and he to the world. See Galatians 2:20; 6:14.

Not only the enemies of Christ, but also His disciples, thought that His death was the end; but it proved to be only the beginning of a more superior life and ministry. He arose from the grave to “bear much fruit.” In fact, there was but little fruitage from His seed sowing until after His resurrection and ascension. The beginning of His high-priestly ministry in heaven brought the great ingathering of souls on the Day of Pentecost. To every Christian, Jesus says: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Matthew 16:24. The only road to success in spiritual things is self-denial and death to self.

Our text is often applied to martyrdom. In fact, it was thus taken so literally in the early centuries of the Christian Era that some even courted persecution and death, and recklessly threw their lives away. Just before his martyrdom, Paul declared that there was laid up for him “a crown of righteousness” which would be delivered to him at the return of Christ. He lost his head at the hands of Nero’s soldiers, but he gained a crown; while the emperor lost his life, his crown, and his soul. Of John Huss it is said: “When the flames kindled about him, he began to sing, ‘Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me,’ and so continued till his voice was silenced forever.” He died with the assurance of eternal life.

On his way to the stake, Latimer said to his fellow martyr: “Fear not, Brother Ridley, we shall this day light a candle in England which will never be put out.” His prophecy was fulfilled, and the light still shines as the result of the loyalty of the Reformers.

But Jesus was not speaking so much of martyrdom as of the daily sacrifices of Christians for the sake of Himself and others. It is believed that 2 Timothy 2:11, 12 is a fragment of an early Christian hymn: “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him: if we deny Him, He also will deny us.”

Our text is well illustrated by a mother’s love. She literally loses her life for the sake of the child in one of the nobles forms of self-sacrifice and selfless devotion. Those who seek to escape physical suffering by compromising principle, avoiding duty, denying Christ, or disowning truth, in the end will lose everything. On the other hand, those who are willing to sacrifice, if necessary, the comforts and pleasures of this life for the sake of Christ and His cause, will find the fulfillment of their fondest hopes when Paradise is restored. The rich young ruler refused to pay the price and lost his wealth and the privilege of being numbered with the truly rich who are “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”

“Sacrifice” is defined as an exchange of something of value for something more valuable. All business is transacted on this basis of an exchange of values. The purchaser sacrifices valuable money in exchange for goods which he considers even more valuable, and both the purchaser and the merchant are satisfied with their bargain. All that the Christian is asked to sacrifice is small in value compared with what he will obtain in return. “He who greedily grasps at his own pleasure to the neglect of higher interests so impoverishes his nature by his mean and narrow way of living that his life is really ruined.” —*The Pulpit Commentary*, on Matthew 16:26.

Jesus summed up the subject under consideration by a question: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Matthew 16:26. Alexander, after defeating every known enemy,

shed tears because there were no other worlds for him to conquer. Such selfishness always eventually loses everything. Only genuine Christians can really conquer the world: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1 John 5:4, 5. This world conquest is permanent because it includes the earth restored to its virgin beauty.

In the parable the rich, greedy, covetous, and selfish fool attempted to hoard everything for his own pleasure. Tennyson made him say:

I built my soul a lordly pleasure house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell;
I said, O soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well.

But that very night his soul was required of him when he was unprepared. He lost everything he valued in this life and also all hope of the more abundant life. He is ever remembered as the rich fool. He demonstrated the truthfulness of the basic principle set forth in John 12:25: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”

Chapter 9 – When Dissatisfaction is a Virtue

Generally speaking, satisfaction is one of the greatest virtues. It is one of the chief goals of life, a sort of will-o'-the-wisp which all in this life seek but never fully find. It is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow of hope and anticipation. However, opinions of what brings satisfaction vary as widely as do human personality, wisdom, and experience. One of the wealthiest men of the United States was asked how much money it would take to satisfy him. He answered, "Just one dollar more;" and he died still unsatisfied. Solomon was also rich, and he spoke from experience when he said that man is never "satisfied with riches" and, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." Ecclesiastes 4:8; 5:10. Many will testify that wealth in material things does not guarantee happiness and satisfaction.

There are others who attempt to find satisfaction in positions of leadership which bring prestige and political power. Still others crave social distinction and popularity as the means of satisfaction. In many other ways men and women are seeking to obtain the elusive goal of contentment through means which will with certainty fail. While there is much disagreement on what will bring satisfaction, all are agreed on its desirability as the chief end of life. In fact, this desire determines the belief of many as to what constitutes heaven. All they know of that future state is that it is a place of complete satisfaction; and that is apparently all they care to know, even though the Scriptures contain many descriptions of its beauty and glory.

Solomon named four things which can never be satisfied: the *grave*, which has received perhaps a hundred and fifty billion victims and still clamors for more; the *barren womb*, which ever yearns for the fulfillment

of its mission in reproduction; the *earth*, which never gets enough rainfall to satisfy its needs; and *fire*, which demands an ever-increasing amount of fuel to gratify its insatiable appetite. See Proverbs 30:15, 16. The wise man might have added the *covetous*, whose wants are never fully met. King David, who enjoyed all the honor and glory and luxury and power for which Oriental monarchs lusted, discovered that satisfaction does not come through material things; and he looked forward to the fulfillment of his hopes and dreams in the life to come. He said: "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." Psalm 17:15.

There is only one source of true and abiding satisfaction of the variety to which the worldling is a stranger. Let us notice a few of the statements written under divine inspiration: "The fear of the Lord tendeth to life; and he that hath it shall abide satisfied." Proverbs 19:23. To the Christian the Lord says: "With long life will I satisfy him, and show him My salvation." He also "satisfieth the longing soul" with "bread from heaven" and with His goodness and mercy. See Psalms 91:16; 107:9; 105:40; Jeremiah 31:14; Psalm 90:14.

The apostle Paul had evidently learned the secret of genuine contentment when he wrote: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Philippians 4:11. To his son in the faith he said: "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." 1 Timothy 6:6-11. Jesus said: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be completely satisfied."

Matthew 5:6, Weymouth. Righteousness by faith in Christ is wonderfully satisfying, as all can testify who know it by experience.

On the other hand, there is satisfaction which is not a virtue. In fact, it is positively dangerous. In some respects dissatisfaction is a virtue of the finest quality. Moody spoke of this kind when he declared: "No man will prepare for a better world until he gets tired of the one he is in." The dissatisfaction of Adam and Eve with their fallen estate compared with the Paradise from which they had been excluded, which led to a longing desire to return someday, was of the holy and meritorious variety. If the Israelites had not been dissatisfied with their status as slaves in Egypt, they would never have followed the leadership of Moses to the land of Canaan. The ten plagues created such a dissatisfaction on the part of Pharaoh that he and his people were willing and glad to let Israel go.

The kicking against the pricks of a guilty conscience made Saul of Tarsus dissatisfied with himself and his Pharisaism, so that he became the greatest apostle and missionary of all time. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was produced by men who could no longer endure conditions in the established Church of Rome. It was the virtue of dissatisfaction that caused Martin Luther to nail to the door of the chapel his ninety-five theses that lighted the fires of the Protestant Reformation and released millions from the bondage of totalitarianism in religious matters. The same spirit produced the further reformation under the Wesleys, Whitefield, Knox, Finney, and scores of others who were not content with things as they were but believed that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Dissatisfaction with their present condition is an incentive which drives students to study and sacrifice to obtain an education, teachers to improve their knowledge and ability, preachers to do more effective service in proclaiming the gospel, physicians to apply more successfully the art of modern medical science in the healing of the sick, and musicians to produce better music and render more adequately the music of the masters. On the same basis inventive genius has ushered us into a new world of comfort and conveniences. In fact, this kind of dissatisfaction has

been the urge and motivating power to progress in every realm of thought and activity.

It is this type of dissatisfaction that turns sinners into saints, who turn their faces like a flint toward the heavenly Canaan and their backs on a world which is in rebellion against God. The severest rebuke in Holy Writ is given last-day Christians who are satisfied with their present knowledge and experience in spiritual things and who desire no change. Christ charges them with a compromising lukewarmness in affection for both God and man. He wishes they possessed the fervent love of the early church, and even prefers the coldness of the unbeliever to their state of torpidity and self-satisfaction.

But this severe rebuke is the rebuke of love. It is given by the great Lover of mankind to those whom He loves as “the apple of His eye.” They are the supreme object of His regard. They are not a rejected people, but rather constitute His own bride, at the door of whose heart temple He knocks and pleads for complete reconciliation. To bring this about He offers positions of royalty in the restored kingdom of His father David. His representative, the Holy Spirit, joins Him in the appeal, and those who are truly wise will accept the offer and become partakers of the satisfaction which will be complete and eternal.

Chapter 10 – When Hatred is Commendable

Hatred is a very ugly word, and therefore how can it have any virtue? The fact that it can be both despicable and praiseworthy is one of the paradoxes of life. Hatred of the ignoble variety is one of the by-products of sin. It is listed among the “works of the flesh” and is the product of the lower nature. As signs of His return, Jesus said, “Many... shall hate one another,” and “the love of many shall wax cold.” Jesus declared that anger and hatred have in them the seeds of murder, and that because of his hatred and jealousy of Christ, Satan “was a murderer from the beginning.” Hatred has been the cause of all the wars and strife and cruelty which have cursed humanity since the entrance of sin.

But there are three kinds of hatred which are a blessing rather than a curse. The first is the hatred which the world has for Christians because their godly lives constantly rebuke sin. Their persecution, however, becomes a blessing in disguise. Jesus said: “Blessed are you when men shall hate you and exclude you from their society and insult you, and spurn your very names as evil things, for the Son of man’s sake. Be glad at such a time, and dance for joy; for your reward is great in heaven; for that is just the way their forefathers behaved to the prophets!” Luke 6:22, 23, Weymouth.

Why rejoice? Because it is an evidence of Christlikeness. Jesus said: “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute

you.” John 15:18-20. Paul declared, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:12.

Genuine Christians have never been popular in this world because their lives and characters have always been a rebuke and an irritation to the ungodly. Jesus was crucified, not because He was bad, but because He was good. It is a mistake to think that if you are good the world will love you. Whether we like it or not, the world has always hated and persecuted the children of God. If Christ should visit the world today as He did nineteen centuries ago, He would be just as unpopular as He was then. For this reason the apostle said: “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.” Even Cain slew his brother “because his own works were evil, and his brother’s righteous.” 1 John 3:12, 13.

The unrighteous will always hate the righteous because of their righteousness. The apostles all suffered persecution and, all but one, martyrdom. This was demonstrated also during the pagan Roman persecutions of the second and third centuries, and again during the domination of the papacy during the Middle Ages. Nor are these persecutions all in the past. We are told that the dragon power of Satan will exhibit its wrath against God’s remnant people, who will come “out of great tribulation” with character robes washed and made white “in the blood of the Lamb.” See Revelation 12:17; 7:14.

The church has always been at its best and made its greatest progress during times of persecution, and at its worst spiritually in times of peace and popularity. There can be no enemies while the church compromises with the enemy. There can be no battles if Christians have already surrendered. There can be no hatred of those who preach unless they preach the truth. There will be no animosity against professed Christians unless they live godly lives.

The second kind of commendable hatred is that of self. Jesus said: “He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.” John 12:25. This means that in the end, the self-centered person will lose everything, while those who deny themselves will be blessed with eternal riches. Jesus said that only those

who deny themselves and bear His cross can be His disciples and inherit the kingdom of glory. After the patriarch Job got a vision of God he said: "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." See Job 42:5, 6. Love of self is one of the nineteen sins which will characterize the last days, according to 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

The third type of virtuous hatred is hatred of sin. The psalmist said: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil," and also, "I hate every false way." See Psalms 97:10; 119:104, 128. An ancient prophet gave wise counsel when he said: "Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate." Amos 5:14, 15. The apostle Paul put it this way: "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." Romans 12:9. "Let your love be a real thing, with a loathing for evil and a bent for what is good" is the Moffatt translation, and "Regard with horror what is evil" is the Weymouth.

This is Christlikeness. It is the secret of a godly life, for of Jesus the Father said: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Hebrews 1:9. Here we are told that hatred of sin is also the secret of happiness. Those who abhor sin as did Jesus will be anointed "with the oil of gladness" above their fellows. This kind of hatred is godlike. It is very virtuous and meritorious. Victory over any sin becomes easy as soon as we cease to love and fondle it, and begin to hate it. It is not hard to forsake the sins and weaknesses which we abhor. Pet sins are the most dangerous, because of our affection for them.

The eyesalve mentioned in Revelation 3:18 is that spiritual discernment which enables God's remnant people to see the wiles of the enemy and shun them, and to detect sin and abhor it, to see themselves as God sees them. Only the Holy Spirit can convince men and women of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and put into their hearts an intense hatred for the sins that nailed the Son of God to the cross. But while hating sin in ourselves or others, we must be like Jesus and continue to love the

sinner. It seems difficult for man to make this distinction, but to do so is Christlike. It is genuine Christianity, and without it there is none worthy of the name.

Chapter 11 - Living While Dead

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. This is one of the key texts of Scripture in the setting forth of the secrets of godly living. The apostle had just declared that he had to die in order to live unto God. In fact, he said: “I die daily.” “With Christ have I been crucified, yet I am living—no longer I, but living in me is Christ” is the Concordant Version.

This is one of Paul’s many paradoxical statements. A. T. Robertson, in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, calls this text “one of Paul’s greatest mystical sayings.” It is indeed a paradox to say that a person can be living and dead at the same time. Is it any wonder that the preaching of the cross has always been a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles? The gospel is therefore called “the mystery of godliness.” The apostle said: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14.

When did the apostle die through crucifixion? In one sense when Christ died on the cross and tasted “death for every man,” and “died for all.” We are told, “If one died for all, then were all dead.” Christ died for the whole human race, and in that sense all were crucified with Him. In a secondary sense, Paul died through crucifixion at his conversion or new birth, when the old man or life of sin died and “a new creature” was born and began to live and “walk in newness of life.” Through death to sin we not only die with Christ, but through baptism we are “buried with Him” and resurrected to a new life in Christ, so that “all things are become new.”

Crucifixion with Christ means a threefold death. In the first place, we become “dead to the law,” so that its penalty or condemnation no longer terrifies us. In the second place, we become “dead indeed unto sin,” which is defined as “the transgression of the law.” The apostle declared that “our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin,” so that “death hath no more dominion over Him.” The counsel is therefore given to “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:6-11. In the third place, the genuine Christian becomes dead to the world. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Galatians 6:14. When the temptations of the world come, the Christian can meet them with the statement, “I am dead to the world, and the world is dead to me.”

When the lusts of sinful flesh begin to clamor for recognition, it is a good thing to reckon or count one’s self “dead indeed unto sin” and at the same time “alive unto God through Jesus Christ.” Did you ever try it when temptations assail you and the enemy comes “in like a flood”? One of the secrets of victory is to say to the tempter, “I do not do that anymore, for I am a Christian,” or “I am dead to that evil practice and therefore cannot indulge anymore.” It is as impossible to appeal to the desires of the sin nature of a crucified Christian as it is to tempt a corpse. Even though Jesus was a partaker of our sinful “flesh and blood,” and was therefore “in all points tempted like as we are,” He was able to say: “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me,” that is, the great tempter could find no foothold or base for a character invasion.

While the apostle was dead through crucifixion, he was able to say, “Nevertheless I live,” and that “in the flesh,” even in “this present evil world.” Those who have attempted to live godly lives by trying to escape from the evil influences of the world by becoming recluses have discovered that “sinful flesh” does not disappear with the monastic life. The power of the gospel makes it possible for a person to be at the same

time in the world, but not of the world. Through death to sin and the new birth, Paul was turned into another man, and so complete was his identification with Christ that his very personality was merged into that of his Master so that they were “one,” thus fulfilling the prayer of Christ recorded in John 17:20-23.

The spiritual experience set forth in our text is beautifully described by Ellen G. White in *Christ's Object Lessons*, page 312: “By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us, He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.”

The same writer declared: “The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether.” “If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pages 172, 668.

With this experience the Christian can say with the apostle: “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” It is His life and His faith, and not our own. It is “the faith of Jesus” that makes God's remnant people patient and obedient saints who are prepared to meet their returning Lord. See Revelation 14:12.

Crucifixion represents a violent and painful death. It is never easy to kill the old life of sin so deeply entrenched in human nature by years of practice; but union with Christ is impossible without it. The new wine must burst and destroy the old bottles of sinful indulgence. Through crucifixion the old life and habits receive their mortal wound and are

supplanted by the divine nature so that “all things are become new.” This is genuine Christianity. It is real life.

Chapter 12 – Sin and Grace

The Scriptures contain many passages where the writer seems to be in conflict with himself and appears to be witnessing against himself. One such seeming inconsistency is the paradoxical statement of the apostle Paul in regard to sin and grace: “Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 5:20, 21.

It is here indicated that sin and grace abound and flourish together in the same environment, the growth of the one increasing the growth of the other. What strange associates! For what could be more incompatible and at greater variance in nature and character than sin and grace? “Sin increased but grace surpassed it far” and “Where sin increased, grace abounded the more” are other translations. It almost sounds as if sin were the source of grace; but, of course, that would be impossible.

This world is characterized by abounding iniquity. With a small beginning in the disobedience of the first Adam, it has become a mighty river sweeping all before it and engulfing the whole world in a deluge of moral corruption. It was sin that brought on the Flood, destroyed the cities of the plain, and brought to an untimely end the Hebrew nation. Transgression of divine law was the cause of the downfall of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome; and it is eating like a canker into the very vitals of the modern nations.

To deny the reality, existence, and nature of sin, and its results, is indeed strange in the light of the facts of history. Perhaps this is a fulfillment of the Scriptural prediction that in the last days there would

come “strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.” Sin is a terrible moral disease, a deadly virus, a devouring scourge, a death-dealing plague, which is carrying untold millions into untimely and hopeless graves. To question the actuality of that which a guilty conscience declares to be a reality does not dispose of the problem of iniquity which figures so largely in the destiny of mankind.

Although sin is great, grace is still greater. Sin abounds, but grace counteracts its deadly effects by abounding “more exceedingly.” In fact, grace superabounds with such an overflow as more than to meet the needs. With its source in “the last Adam,” it has become a mighty river of life bringing refreshment and blessing to every thirsty soul. Like the mighty Mississippi River, which has its source in little Lake Itasca in Minnesota and flows toward the Gulf of Mexico with ever-increasing volume, grace overflows its banks in a great surplus of divine favor for sin-burdened humanity.

Sin is declared to be “the sting of death,” but in the gospel has been provided an antidote which counteracts its deadly poison. The poisonous snake may inject a death-dealing venom into its victim, but an antitoxin has been provided which nullifies its power. The killing power of the virus is great, but that of the antipoison is greater. The remedy is more potent than the disease. Just as the antidote is needed only where there is poison, so grace is needed only where sin abounds so that its power can be neutralized. The greater the amount of poison, the larger the portion of antidote needed. Thus where sin abounds, grace, its antitoxin, must abound more exceedingly.

This is also aptly illustrated by the counteracting influences of the white blood corpuscles in their war against the disease germs which enter the body. In the presence of disease germs, the normal number of ten thousand white cells per cubic millimeter is doubled within twenty-four hours and may even increase to one million in order to outnumber, and thereby destroy the destructive power of, the disease germs. These multiplying white cells swarm to the parts of the body attacked in order to devour the enemy or wall them in so they can do no harm. These

protectors of the body go where they are most needed, just as military leaders shift their forces to the part of the battlefield where the enemy makes the assault. It is therefore true that where the disease germs abound, the protective white blood cells much more abound.

Thus even when the stronghold of sin seems invincible and impregnable, through grace God has provided a complete remedy so that victory may be certain. Grace is the unmerited favor of God which is bestowed, not on the basis of what we deserve, but according to the measure of the unfathomable love of the Eternal. "The law entered, that the offense might abound," is the declaration of Scripture. The effect of rules, laws, and regulations is always the increase of transgression. Prohibitions always multiply offenses, just as microscopes and telescopes multiply to the vision objects which were before invisible and unknown. The increased vision, however, does not in reality affect the number, but only increases our knowledge of their existence.

The purpose of the law is not to bring redemption, but that sin might be seen in its true light and recognized as "exceeding sinful," so as to reveal the need of grace and create a craving for redemption. Grace is needed where there is sin; and therefore where sin abounds and flourishes and the need is greatest, there grace is the more available to meet the emergency. Regardless of the situation, full and complete provision has been made to meet it.

Sin reached its climax in the crucifixion of the Innocent One, and this was also the supreme manifestation of grace. This was the event that opened a fountain of cleansing grace for sin and uncleanness so that complete victory may be assured. There is therefore no excuse for failure on the basis of circumstances and environment, for "when the enemy shall come in like a flood," the abundance of evil is more than matched by the more exceeding quantity of divine favor. We may rejoice in the fact that the same world that is engulfed in a deluge of iniquity is also encircled with an atmosphere of grace which is still more abundant.

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
 Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt,
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
 There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Sin and despair like the sea waves cold,
 Threaten the soul with infinite loss;
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
 Points to the refuge, the mighty cross.

Dark is the stain that we cannot hide,
 What can avail to wash it away?
Look, there is flowing a crimson tide;
 Whiter than snow you may be today.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
 Freely bestowed on all who believe;
You that are longing to see His face,
 Will you this moment His grace receive?

—Julia H. Johnson.

Chapter 13 – The Peaceful Sword

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.” Matthew 10:34; Luke 12:51.

In the light of many other scriptures concerning Christ’s mission to this earth, this is indeed strange. Prophecy declared that He would come into the world as “the Prince of Peace.” At the time of His birth the angel chorus over the hills of Bethlehem cried out in rapturous praise, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men,” or “On earth peace among men with whom He is pleased!” (Revised Standard Version.)

Just before His departure, Jesus left His disciples the richest spiritual legacy they could desire in this world of strain and tension: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27. Again He said: “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.” Genuine Christians know from experience that Jesus is the only source of peace and rest. He rebuked Peter for his militant spirit and made him put up his sword because “all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” The Prince of Peace never sanctioned the use of the sword of steel. The purpose of His advent and of the plan of redemption is to bring peace to restless hearts and a war-weary world.

Then what did Jesus mean when He said that He came not to bring peace, but rather the sword and division and dissension? Was He referring to the literal sword? He explains His own statement: “For I am come to

set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Matthew 10:35, 36. It is evident that He was not speaking of war between nations. He was speaking of the *results* of the preaching of the gospel, rather than the *purpose* of His advent.

The spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world are antagonistic. Jesus is the world's No. 1 disturber. His message separates and divides and often stirs up bitter opposition and hatred and even persecution leading to martyrdom. "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," declared the apostle John; and Jesus said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." He said further: "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." The apostle Paul declared, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 1 John 3:13; John 15:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:12.

The gospel divides the world into two different classes and produces a deadly antagonism between two alien and hostile principles, sometimes separating the chiefest of friends and cutting asunder the closest of ties, including those of kinship. The Christian life is pictured as a warfare, and Christians as soldiers clothed in armor and wielding spiritual weapons. These are used against the unseen hosts of darkness which are declared to be the "wicked spirits" who "control and govern this dark world." Therefore the counsel is given to "put on the complete armor of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground on the day of battle, and, having fought to the end, to remain victors on the field." See Ephesians 6:12-18, Weymouth.

The chief weapon that defeats the enemy is "the sword of the Spirit," which is declared to be "the word of God." It is described as being "quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," and "is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In vision the revelator saw Christ in His

glorified state, “and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” This is the sword that Jesus said He came to bring to the world. Said the apostle: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) casting down imaginations, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” See Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:16; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

Speaking of this spiritual warfare, A. T. Robertson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, said: “It is no namby-pamby sentimentalism that Christ preaches, no peace at any price. The cross is Christ’s answer to the devil’s offer of compromise in world domination. For Christ the kingdom of God is virile righteousness, not mere emotionalism. Christianity meets evil head on in an all-out battle to the finish. It is total war between opposing principles, opinions, and standards. This is the only road to peace.”

Our texts also have an application in the individual life. The gospel produces a war in the soul, demanding surrender and cleavage of old habits and cherished sins. It insists on new motives and standards which are antagonistic to those which were previously in control. The old-Adam nature never surrenders or dies without a fight to the finish. The heart and will become decisive battlefields where surrender to Christ is the only price of victory and peace. In this change “all things are become new.”

This struggle between truth and error, righteousness and evil, also rages at times in families where members of the same household line up on opposing sides. Jesus said: “From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Luke 12:52, 53. This often happens, and on occasion children have been disinherited and driven from home because of their religious convictions.

This also happens in communities where evangelistic services bring divisions between neighbors and friends. At times lifelong friendships are cut asunder when one accepts unpopular truths and another rejects or neglects to obey. There is a parting of the way, and some go one way and some another. Two ways open before travelers; one is strait, narrow, strict, and restricted, and Jesus said: "Few there be that find it." The other is broad, easy, liberal, and popular, and "many there be which go in there at." One leads to eternal life and the other to eternal destruction, although at the parting of the ways they may seem to run in parallel directions.

This brings us to the conclusion that if Christians have no enemies to oppose and even hate them, there must be something wrong. Does it mean that they have compromised with the world or gone over to the side of the enemy? Does it inticate that they either are not engaged in war with the hosts of darkness or have surrendered? If we are not hated by the world, is it because we are too much like the world and therefore create no opposition? If our religion does not produce division and even persecution, is it because we are failing in our methods of preaching the truth, or is it because of the absence of the convicting power of the Holy Spirit which was so manifest in apostolic days?

In the early church the mighty two-edged sword of the Spirit cut both ways. It cut away sins and divided families, communities, and even nations. Why doesn't the gospel produce the same results today? A well-known writer has answered this question in the following statement: "Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is, that the church has conformed to the world's standard, and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit

of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled.” —Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 48.

When the divinely predicted revival and reformation prepare the church for the visitation of the Holy Spirit in a renewal of apostolic power, then the work of the gospel will be brought to a speedy and triumphant conclusion; the church militant will become the church triumphant, and there will be peace, permanent peace.

Chapter 14 – Keep up Your Courage

Jesus said: “These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” John 16:33. “In the world you have affliction. But keep up your courage: I have won the victory over the world” is the Weymouth translation.

The inference here that trouble, affliction, and tribulation can produce courage and good cheer is to the world a contradiction of terms. Only a genuine Christian can comprehend such a statement. To all others it is foolishness.

In the statement, “These things I have spoken unto you,” Jesus refers to his series of messages contained in the previous chapters, in which He promised peace, courage, and ultimate victory to His followers. This was His final instruction before He offered His memorable prayer to the Father and began His passion in the Garden of Gethsemane. “Be of good cheer” was one of the favorite sayings of Jesus, expressing the very purpose of His mission to this sad world. What a cheerless and dreary place this earth would be if He had not paid it a visit!

In saying, “That in Me ye might have peace,” Jesus declared Himself to be the only source of peace. The apostle said: “He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between” Jews and Gentiles, and all the class and race distinctions which divide the human family into rival factions. The promise is: “And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.” In fact, it is “peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near,” while in contrast “the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it

cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt,” because “there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” See Isaiah 54:13; 57:19-21. The world cannot give peace, because it has none to give.

Our text teaches that those who have peace in Christ will have tribulations in the world, and that this fact should be taken for granted by all Christians. Paul declared: “No man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulations; even as it came to pass, and ye know.” 1 Thessalonians 3:3, 4. See also John 15:18-21. “That none of you might be unnerved by your present trials: for you yourselves know that they are our appointed lot” is the Weymouth translation of the former text. In this there can be no exception, for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” It is the legacy of Christians in a rebel world under the rulership of its god and prince.

The attacks of the enemy through trials and persecution give evidence of both godliness and peace, and therefore constitute a reason for good cheer and courage. It becomes cheerful tribulation because it is an evidence that we belong to the family of heaven. This was the attitude of the apostles. We are told that when the leaders of the Sanhedrin “had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” Acts 5:40-42. Is our spiritual experience such that we would consider it an honor to suffer reproach and persecution for His sake?

Another apostle wrote: “Reckon it nothing but joy, my brethren, whenever you find yourselves hedged in by various trials. Be assured that the testing of your faith leads to power of endurance. Only let endurance have perfect results so that you may become perfect and complete, deficient in nothing.” James 1:2-4, Weymouth. In one of His beatitudes Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who “are persecuted for

righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are ye," He said, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew 5:10-12. "Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy" is the record of Jesus' statement in Luke 6:23. In other words, Jesus declared that vicious gossip and tribulation which are the result of godliness constitute sufficient reason for a celebration because of the implications and rewards.

From the viewpoint of the world this is indeed a mystery, an enigma, because the peace and joy of the wicked depend wholly upon outward circumstances and conditions. The Christian can "count it all joy" because his source of peace and happiness is within the heart, where the Prince of Peace is enthroned. While it is true that Jesus during His earthly sojourn was "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," at the same time He manifested a serenity of spirit and a majesty of calmness unknown to man since the fall of Adam.

Only twice is it recorded that "Jesus wept," and this is not because it was usual, but because it was so unusual. It was the exception rather than the rule. In Him were blended the sorrow of the world and the joys of heaven.

"There are many who have an erroneous idea of the life and character of Christ. They think that He was devoid of warmth and sunniness, that He was stern, severe, and joyless. In many cases the whole religious experience is colored by these gloomy views. It is often said that Jesus wept, but that He was never known to smile... But though His life was self-denying and shadowed with pain and care, His spirit was not crushed. His countenance did not wear an expression of grief and repining, but ever one of peaceful serenity. His heart was a wellspring of life; and wherever He went, He carried rest and peace, joy and gladness.

"Our Saviour was deeply serious and intensely in earnest, but never gloomy or morose. The life of those that imitate Him will be full of earnest purpose; they will have a deep sense of personal responsibility.

Levity will be repressed; there will be no boisterous merriment, no rude jesting; but the religion of Jesus gives peace like a river. It does not quench the light of joy; it does not restrain cheerfulness, nor cloud the sunny, smiling face.” —Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, pages 125, 126.

Another writer said of the fusing of these two spirits in Christianity: “The blending of fear and love, of law with promise, of righteousness with mercy, of the sense of sin with that of pardon, of a great peace with a crushing tribulation, is one of the most constant tokens, signs, or marks of the mind of Christ.” —*The Pulpit Commentary*, 1950 ed., vol. 17, p. 310.

Gerald Kennedy wrote: “This is the saving sadness of Christianity.” “The Christian faith brings to human life a redeeming sorrow, which in turn creates a triumphant joy.” —*The Lion and the Lamb*, pages 81, 87.

In the seventh chapter of the Revelation is a description of those who are gathered out of the world by the gospel in the closing generation while celestial beings hold back the disrupting influences which would hinder the divine purpose. A question is asked in regard to a triumphant company of saints “arrayed in white robes,” and where they came from. The answer is: “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Their reward is a place in the throne room of the Eternal. See verses 9, 13, 14.

We are to rejoice in all the unpleasant experiences of life, because to Christians they are blessings in disguise. “Fiery trials make golden Christians,” is an old but true saying. In the furnace of affliction the dross is separated from the gold of character so that the reflection of the image of Christ becomes visible. Polishing and refining the character through trials is a painful process, but the results give cause for rejoicing. These polished and living stones compose the spiritual temple of Christ and are the jewels in His crown which give evidence of His right to rule, so that “affliction shall not rise up the second time.”

Chapter 15 – Riches Amid Poverty

I know thy ... poverty, (but thou art rich)" is the statement of Jesus to the suffering church of Smyrna. Revelation 2:9. This is another puzzle to all but genuine Christians. To be poverty-stricken and wealthy at the same time is a contradiction of terms and does not make sense to the unspiritual mind. "Your sufferings I know, and your poverty —but you are rich" is the Weymouth translation.

The Christians of the Smyranean period of persecution and martyrdom, when pagan Rome attempted to blot Christianity from the earth, knew by experience the spoiling of their goods and the confiscation of their earthly possessions that left them destitute in material things. But they laid up treasure in heaven and were "rich toward God," far richer than their persecutors, including the emperors. There are far more important forms of wealth than material possessions.

Let us notice a few of the many Scriptural references to spiritual wealth. We read of "the riches of His goodness," "the riches of His glory," "the riches of His grace," and "the exceeding riches of His grace." The apostle speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" and declares that "the Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him." While He is just, He is also 'rich in mercy.' Said the apostle: "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19. He also speaks of "the riches of the glory of this mystery; ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Colossians 1:27. Such Christians are wealthy beyond computation, far richer than King Croesus of ancient Lydian fame. They have the "riches of the full assurance of understanding" because of their relation to Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." A warning is given against trusting in "uncertain riches," with the admonition to trust "in the living God, who giveth us richly all

things to enjoy.” It is our privilege to be “rich in good works,” and in this respect all Christians should be far wealthier than they are.

Moses had a true sense of values when he made his momentous decision to renounce the throne of Egypt for something more valuable. We are told that he esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” Hebrews 11:26. He made a wise decision, and is today enjoying the pleasures of heaven instead of being the mummy of a pharaoh in a museum to be gazed at by visiting curiosity seekers.

The following question deserves careful consideration: “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him?” James 2:5. The apostle Paul spoke of Christians “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” 2 Corinthians 6:10. “A pauper’ but the means of wealth to many, without a penny but possessed of everything.” (Moffatt.) “We securely possess all things” is the Weymouth rendering. Christians are not only wealthy, but they are the dispensers of true wealth to mankind. “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee,” said the apostle Peter to the lifelong cripple at the gate called Beautiful, and he gave him that which was far more valuable to him than all material wealth.

Spiritual riches eventually include material wealth, for, as we sing: “My Father is rich in houses and lands; He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands! Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold, His coffers are full —He has riches untold.” Jesus said: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” and Paul wrote: “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Romans 8:16-18. An heir is considered already virtually in possession.

Trench declared that “there are both poor rich men, and rich poor men.” An unknown writer thus describes some of the rich poor men of our country a few years ago: “In 1923 a group of the world's most successful financiers met at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago. Present were: the president of the largest independent steel company, the president of the largest utility company, the greatest wheat speculator, the president of the New York Stock Exchange, a member of the President's cabinet, the greatest bear in Wall Street, the president of the Bank of International Settlements, the head of the world's greatest monopoly.

“Collectively, these tycoons controlled more wealth than there was in the United States Treasury, and for years newspapers and magazines had been printing their success stories and urging the youth of the nation to follow their examples. Twenty-six years later, let's see what happened to them. The president of the largest independent steel company —Charles Schwab —lived on borrowed money the last five years of his life, and died penniless. The greatest wheat speculator —Arthur Cutten —died abroad insolvent. The president of the New York Stock Exchange —Richard Whitney —was recently released from Sing Sing. The member of the President's cabinet —Albert Fall —was pardoned from prison so he could die at home. The greatest bear on Wall Street —Jesse Livermore —committed suicide. The president of the Bank of International Settlements —Leon Fraser —committed suicide. The head of the world's greatest monopoly —Ivar Kreuger —committed suicide. All of these men had learned how to make money, but not one of them had learned how to live.”

Contrasting the early and the present-day church, one writer said: “Two characteristics of the church of the first three centuries were material poverty and spiritual power. Two characteristics of the twentieth century church are its material wealth and spiritual weakness.” —McCarrell. The church of this generation is described in Revelation 3:15-18 as being “rich, and increased with goods,” and in need of nothing, in its own estimation, but “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” in the sight of Christ. It is a rich poor church.

Someone has spoken of this rebuke of Christ as “gentle and loving irony.” The heavenly Merchantman asks a spiritual pauper to buy of Him the true riches of love and faith and truth, the white raiment of His own righteousness to cover his spiritual nakedness, and the eyesalve of the Holy Spirit’s anointing to give him discernment. The promised reward for victory over the Laodicean lukewarmness is the greatest contained in Holy Writ, a place with Christ on His throne when He reigns over the restored kingdom of His father David as King of kings and Lord of lords.

How cheering and encouraging to the Christian pilgrim is the divine promise: “For everything belongs to you —be it ... the world or life or death, things present or future —everything belongs to you; and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.” 1 Corinthians 3:22, 23, Weymouth. The apostle virtually says: “Christ belongs to God, and you belong to Christ, and therefore everything belongs to you.” In the light of this text the following question is very meaningful: “Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven’s storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of omnipotence?” —Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, page 99.

Chapter 16 – Seeing the Invisible

Let us consider another of the many strange and paradoxical statements of the Scriptures: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18. “We look not at things seen, but things unseen; for things seen are temporary, but things unseen are eternal” is the Weymouth translation.

This statement is a contradiction to those who cannot see through the eyes of faith. The apostle declares that Christians can see the unseeable and invisible, and makes a clear distinction between material and spiritual things, the temporal and the eternal. With a true sense of values he places the emphasis on that which is of supreme importance.

Ours is a materialistic age, reveling in gross secularism. The chief emphasis is on those things which can be seen and handled. Values are measured on a fleshly and physical rather than on a spiritual basis. And yet, according to this and other Scriptures, salvation is possible only to those who set their affections on things above, on things invisible but eternal. What we see with our natural vision is not only temporary, but unreal and unnatural. As the result of sin, “creation fell into subjection to failure and unreality.” Romans 8:20, Weymouth. In the original perfect state, all things were real and natural. Sin makes everything and everybody it touches unreal and temporary. In 2 Peter 3:10-13 we are told that the visible material things will be “dissolved” and the works of man “burned up,” and therefore the vision of Christians should be fixed on “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” The righteous

and the wicked have never been able to understand each other, and each has considered the other queer and strange.

In the final crash which brings to an end the reign of sin, we are told that everything will be shaken that can be shaken, so that only “those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” When Christ returns, even the apparently permanent and “everlasting mountains” will be scattered, and the “perpetual hills” will bow. See Habakkuk 3:6. In describing the seventh and last plague, the revelator declared: “Every island fled away, and the mountains were not found,” or, “There was not a mountain anywhere to be seen,” according to another translation. This is accomplished by the mighty earthquake described in the previous verses. See Revelation 16:17-20.

The great nations of antiquity will then have all disappeared, and many of their cities have become heaps of dust. The so-called fire-and earthquake-proof buildings of our day may be instantly reduced to rubble by the modern weapons of war. Even many of the material things connected with the church serve but a temporary purpose and will cease to exist when their mission is accomplished. This is true of organizations, institutions, buildings, and a host of other things which serve only as scaffolding for the erection of the spiritual temple of the Lord. It is always unwise, even in ecclesiastical affairs, to place the chief emphasis on the visible and transitory rather than the invisible and eternal.

It is only by faith that we can look upon the unseen. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1. “Now faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope, and a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see” is the Weymouth translation. Everything the Christian hopes for is out of sight during our earthly sojourn, and can be seen and its reality grasped only on the basis of faith. “No man hath seen God at any time,” and He is declared to be the One “whom no man hath seen, nor can see,” and yet He is “the Eternal” and “The everlasting Father.”

To Thomas, Jesus said: “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” Moses “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” He got a

view of the invisible Christ, and his vision of earthly things faded into insignificance in comparison. It is by beholding Christ that we are "changed into the same image," and Jesus said: "For this is My Father's will, that everyone who fixes his gaze on the Son of God and believes in Him should have the Life of the Ages, and I will raise him to life on the last day." John 6:40, Weymouth.

The Third Person of the Godhead is called "the eternal Spirit," who Jesus promised would abide with His followers forever; yet He, too, is invisible. The results of His mission are illustrated by the wind which can be heard but not seen. Only the results of His work are visible. It is "the works of the flesh" and "the fruit of the Spirit," which are said to be "manifest" to mankind. See Galatians 5:19-23. Just as fruit on a tree is the result of an invisible power in nature, so visible conduct is the product of an invisible power working from within the development of a Christlike character.

Character is the only treasure we can take with us from this world to the next, for only that which is in harmony with God's eternal purpose can endure. The principles of His kingdom are the only sure and steadfast things this world knows. In fact, the most permanent and valuable things in this life are invisible, such as the spiritual fruits of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, wisdom, knowledge, and righteousness. Intellectual, moral, and spiritual attainments far surpass in worth and permanence the things which can be seen.

Jesus said: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." This world, brought back to its original Edenic state, is to be the future and eternal home of the redeemed. Its capital, the New Jerusalem, contains the mansions Jesus said He had gone to prepare. All these things are invisible except through the vision of faith. The statement "Faith is the substance of things hoped for" is translated "title deed" in the Moulton and Milligan *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*. A title deed is all the evidence needed to prove the existence and reality of property which has never yet been seen by its possessor. It is "the evidence of things not seen."

Jesus gave timely counsel to this materialistic generation when He said: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33. He had just been talking about the things we eat, drink, and wear, as representative of all the material things of life, which constitute the chief quest of mankind, especially in the greedy, grasping, and covetous generation in which we live. Where do you place the chief emphasis? Are you fixing your gaze on the visible or invisible things of time and eternity; on the temporary or the eternal? Upon your answer depends your eternal destiny.

Chapter 17 – The Road to Royalty

In bold contrast to the principles which have always prevailed in this world under the dominion of sin are the words of Christ recorded in Mark 10:42-45: “Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: and whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.” “The Son of man also did not come to be waited upon, but to wait on others” is the Weymouth. “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve” is Weymouth’s rendering of Matthew 20:28.

From the viewpoint of the world this is indeed a puzzling statement, contrary to the regular order of things. In Christianity the genuine ruler serves and the servant rules. “Everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” is the divine decree and a restatement of the same principle. This is best illustrated in the contrasting attitudes of Christ and Lucifer. In Isaiah 14:12-16 the once mighty angel is pictured as attempting to exalt himself to the place of Christ, or Michael, “above the stars,” or angels of God, and to “be like the Most High.” However, the sentence is that he shall “be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit,” and all the unfallen universe who once esteemed him so highly will look upon him with contempt.

On the other hand the Son of God “emptied Himself” and “stripped Himself of His glory” and “equality with God,” or “the insignia of Majesty” (Lightfoot), and “humbled Himself” and even stooped to die the death of a criminal on the cross. As a consequence “God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” See

Philippians 2:5-11. The “King of kings, and Lord of lords,” the royal Majesty of the universe, became the Servant of servants in order that we might become members of the royal family of heaven. His meekness was the road to kingly glory and greatness. The apostle Peter declared: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” He then adds: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” 1 Peter 5:5, 6. “So that at the right time He may set you on high” is another translation.

The occasion which called forth the paradoxical statement of Jesus was a quarrel among the disciples as to who would be the greatest. James and John had persuaded their mother to request the two highest places in Christ’s kingdom for them. This made the others indignantly jealous, for that was the position to which each of them aspired. Some believe that the two were related to Jesus; if so, they may have felt that kinship gave them a priority over the others. The request may have been inspired by the promise of Jesus that the Twelve would “sit upon twelve thrones” and rule over the twelve nations of the redeemed in the kingdom of glory.

In answer to this satanic spirit of exaltation and the desire for positions of power and authority, Jesus called a little child to Him, and, taking him into His arms, said: “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:3, 4. Self-abasement is the most difficult of all things for both saints and sinners. Someone has said: “Climbing is performed in the same position as creeping.” It seems that Peter, James, and John were the worst offenders in this selfish seeking, perhaps because they had more than once been selected from among the Twelve for special privileges, and this priority of opportunity gave them feelings of superiority.

This contention for priority broke out on several occasions among the disciples, the last being in the upper room just before Jesus entered the Garden of Gethsemane on His way to Calvary. Luke 22:24-26. At this Passover feast, the last that would ever have any significance, Judas was

given the honored position at the right hand of Jesus, who had full knowledge that he was a traitor; and Peter and John were also in preferred positions at the table. It was their feelings of superiority over each other that prevented any of them from acting the part of a servant in performing the customary courtesy of foot washing.

One of the chief reasons why Jesus acted the part of a servant in washing their feet was to cleanse the alienation and jealousy from their hearts. He wished to demonstrate the truthfulness of what He had been saying about true greatness. The Son of the Highest was serving them, for He “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” Speaking of this occasion, E. Stanley Jones wrote: “He was so conscious of greatness that He dared to be humble. Into the cup has gone this majesty of soul linked with lowly service. And we, who dare not be humble lest we show our real smallness, drink of the life of Him who was so great that He dared stoop, and begin to learn what kingliness really is —the power to bend and serve.” —*Christ at the Round Table*, page 229.

The character and conduct of the apostles after Pentecost indicate that they learned the lesson well. Peter counseled church leaders not to be “lords over God’s heritage,” but to be “ensamples to the flock.” 1 Peter 5:3. To James and John, on the occasion of their request for position in His kingdom, Jesus said: “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?” They assured Him that they were able, not knowing what they were saying. They were thinking of thrones of glory, but He of the cup of agony. They would soon see Him, not on a throne of glory with themselves occupying high positions on the right and left, but on the cross on Golgotha, with a thief hanging on either side.

The two brothers did drink of the cup of suffering. They were the first and the last of the disciples to die. James died by the sword of Herod Agrippa, and John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil. After being miraculously delivered, he was banished to the Isle of Patmos as punishment for preaching the gospel. All of the other apostles suffered martyrdom. The qualifications for places with Christ on His throne of glory are set forth in Revelation 3:18-21. In the kingdom of glory only

humble persons who in this life acted as servants will be exalted to high positions and privileges.

Chapter 18 – Burden Bearing

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." "For every man shall bear his own burden." Galatians 6:2, 5. Here is what appears to be a contradiction. The apostle seems to reverse himself. But the fact that he made both statements so close together and in the same part of the same chapter of the same epistle, indicates that he did so knowingly, intending to express a paradox. If these statements had been made in two different letters and years apart, we would be more inclined to think that he might have forgotten and double-crossed himself.

In the first place, the apostle used two different Greek words which unfortunately were translated into the same English word. The difference in meaning, however, is very slight, and the correction is made in practically all the more modern translations, which use the word "load" in the latter text. "Burden" as used in the former text has the meaning of a weight which presses heavily upon the mind and spirit because of toil, anxiety, suffering, or responsibility, including burdens which others should and could carry. In another epistle, Paul said: "We who are strong ought to bear the burdens that the weak make for themselves and us." Romans 15:1, Moffatt.

In the second text under consideration, the "load" is that which every man is under obligation to carry and from which he should never seek to escape responsibility. The same word was used to describe the load each soldier must carry while on the march and from which he could not be relieved. "For every man will have to carry his own load" and "For everyone will have to bear his own load of responsibility" are the Weymouth and Moffatt translations.

The first text speaks of the burdens which sometimes exceed one's own strength and ability, or for some reason are shunned or neglected. The second has to do with the load of responsibility which is proportionate to one's own strength and ability, and which he is duty bound to carry without complaint. In addition to their own burdens, the strong are urged to help lift the load of those who are being crushed under a weight too heavy for them to bear. These added burdens include those which others sometimes unnecessarily make for themselves and their neighbors. There are some of this class of shirkers in every organization.

The burdens of others are to be shared in order to "fulfill the law of Christ." What is the law of Christ in this respect? Jesus said: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another," and Paul declared: "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." John 13:34; Galatians 5:14. This same principle is set forth in the golden rule, which demands that we do unto others that which we would have them do unto us.

Jesus set the supreme example in burden bearing. "He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and "the chastisement of our peace was upon Him," and "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah 53:4-6. The psalmist said: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved." Psalm 55:22. This invitation of David finds a re-echo in 1 Peter 5:7: "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." In Romans 15:3 we are assured: "Even Christ pleased not Himself." He was the great Burden Bearer. He was utterly selfless and came into the world to serve rather than to be served.

The statement immediately preceding the counsel to bear one another's burdens indicates that the apostle is speaking chiefly of the burden of the soul, the load of the sins and mistakes which weaken the spirituality and crush the life forces: "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Galatians 6:1. Only the

spiritual can fulfill the law of Christ in helping to lift the heavy burdens of life. Verse 3 indicates that the proud and conceited are not qualified to do this work: "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

Those who think themselves superior in piety, wisdom, and achievements, while at the same time they are harsh, critical, overbearing, and unsympathetic, are not Christians and therefore cannot practice the golden rule. In refusing to help others they set themselves above Christ, who came into this world to minister. The apostle then calls for self-examination: "But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another." "But let every man scrutinize his own conduct, and then he will find out, not with reference to another but with reference to himself." (Weymouth.) Such scrutiny will lead to meekness, humility, and the destruction of the spirit of pharisaism which boasts of superiority over other men.

Then follows the appeal for each to carry his own load so as not to be a burden to others. To the Thessalonian believers Paul gave the instruction: "If any would not work, neither should he eat." He said that word had come to him that some "walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies," and he urges "that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread," and that they "be not weary in well-doing." 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13.

Never was this counsel more greatly needed than today, not only in the church, but also in the community, the state, the nation, and the world. Putting this Scriptural policy into practice would quickly change a situation which is daily becoming more serious and is threatening to undermine the foundations of society and government. As never before, individuals, institutions, states, and nations have their hands outstretched for help. "The welfare state" has become a familiar expression, and the ever-increasing demands for gifts, pensions, and benefits of every description are becoming an intolerable burden under which modern society groans for deliverance. Thousands of able-bodied men and women

expect to be warmed, clothed, fed, and educated by the labor, sacrifice, and expense of others.

This situation has not only had a deadening effect on the spirit of zeal, industry, ambition, and initiative, but it has also weakened the sense of responsibility in regard to financial obligations, so that the divine command to “owe no man anything” has largely become a dead letter and the most solemn promises meaningless. Doubtless the instruction also has an application to the bearing of responsibilities in positions of trust in both church and state. Even in the work of the Lord it seems increasingly difficult to persuade those with talents to use them in His service. The statement recorded in Lamentations 3:27, “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,” is still splendid counsel, for only those who have learned to be faithful to duty in childhood and youth can be trusted in manhood and womanhood.

So, first of all, let us endeavor to the best of our strength and ability to bear our own burdens, and then be ready to lend a helping hand to those who struggle under loads too heavy to bear, at least until they are able to carry them. Let us never forget that circumstances may come suddenly and emergencies may arrive unexpectedly even to those apparently the most secure. Help will be needed, and who can be expected to respond more quickly and graciously than the members of the household of faith by demonstrating the practical application of the golden rule, which is Christianity in action?

Chapter 19 - Liking the Unlikable

And ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.” Luke 6:31, 32. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.” (Revised Standard Version.) “If you like only your own kind, what is so special about that?” is another translation.

It requires no special effort on the part of saints or sinners to like the likable and love the lovable, for love begets love. Such reciprocity is natural and spontaneous. They are of our kind and belong to our clan or tribe. In fact, a person must be guarded against liking them too much and thus being a respecter of persons, which is un-Christlike. If we wish to attempt something very difficult that will bring real merit and show real nobility of character, we should learn to like the unlikable and love the unlovable —those who do not naturally appeal to us and who even seem obnoxious and repulsive. This must even include those we consider to be enemies.

Our text indicates that this seemingly impossible achievement is embraced in the golden rule. In fact, it is Christ’s own interpretation of that great standard of Christian conduct. It has always been hard to love or even like some people and be as nice to them as we should. A Chicago psychiatrist declared that such an attempt may produce ulcers, colitis, or high blood pressure. However it is worth the risk, for it is impossible for a Christian to feel right under the influence of dislikes or hatreds, which produce uneasy feelings and guilty consciences, even when there seem to be sufficient reasons for our attitudes.

The Scriptural theme, “If you love God, love your brother also,” is sometimes disturbing and even embarrassing, since it involves loving those who are not lovable, at least in our own estimation. Christ was not only a great teacher and preacher, but He practiced what he taught and preached. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. Both “the world” and “whosoever” include me, regardless of who I am or what I am like. He liked the unlikable and loved the unlovable, including His bitterest enemies who mocked Him and nailed Him to the cross. He demonstrated that love by making the supreme sacrifice to save them.

The apostle wrote: “For already, while we were still helpless, Christ at the right moment died for the ungodly. Why, it is scarcely conceivable that anyone would die for a simply just man, although for a good and lovable man perhaps someone, here and there, will have the courage even to lay down his life. But God gives proof of His love to us in Christ’s dying for us while we were still sinners.” Romans 5:6-8, Weymouth. We too often forget our great Example, who on the cross cried out, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” Few seem to understand the significance of the prayer we offer so easily, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” We ask God to pardon us, on the basis of our attitude toward those who have wronged us.

It is difficult if not impossible fully to explain or understand our dislikes. Often no sound reason exists. Generally they are based on a lack of Knowledge

Acquaintance often changes the entire situation. The apparent conceit which repels us may be only an attempt to cover up a basic uncertainty or hide an inferiority complex. Even noise and rowdiness have been efforts to conceal an absence of ease, and may be but an act to bolster morale. The braggart may be boasting because he is lonely and craves attention and friendliness. He is anxious for someone to notice him and admire him, and he knows of no other way to accomplish these results.

A psychologist gave wise counsel when he said: "Practice liking other people. Practice liking particular people. It will be a splendid exercise for you to pick out someone in your neighborhood whom you never did like especially, and make yourself like him." What a splendid project this is for us all! Edwin Markham set forth the principle of genuine Christianity when he wrote:

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

It is well to study the reasons for our dislikes so as to be able to correct them. Have we done something which has produced dislike on the part of another? Or is my dislike based merely on another's dislike for me? Perhaps the unfavorable circumstances connected with the first contact make it difficult to forget the early impressions. Is it fair to permit such deductions to determine my future attitude? Or, do we allow ourselves to become prejudiced by a chance remark or some vicious gossip? Prejudice is an abbreviated form of prejudgment and is the rendering of a decision before the evidence is all in, an offense so serious that it would mean the impeachment of a judge.

An old Chinese Christian woman formed the splendid habit of reading a text from the New Testament each morning and then endeavoring to put the instruction into practice during the day. One morning she read Matthew 5:43, 44: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." This was a hard one, and the shock held her up in her reading program for almost a month. She had a neighbor who had burned her crops because of spite and hatred, and she had hated in return. Finally she mustered the courage to make things right and get on good terms with her enemy, and again she went on through the Scriptures rejoicing in her daily reading and living program.

It is a worthy practice to learn to look for something good in everybody, including those we do not like; and this is the recommendation of Scripture.

Chapter 20 – Victory Through Surrender

Another Christian experience which is a seeming contradiction to the world and is contrary to all the rules of military science, is that victory comes through surrender. In the Scriptures, Christians are represented as soldiers engaged in a great conflict composed of many battles and resulting in final victory. The glorious promised rewards at the close of the seven letters of Christ to the churches of Asia as revealed in chapters 2 and 3 of the Revelation, are to the overcomers, or victors.

Christ is “the Captain of the Lord’s host,” the Commander in Chief of the army of the Lord. He is declared to be “a man of war,” and when He ascended He left His representative and Vicegerent, the Holy Spirit, to direct the battle on earth in His stead. The apostolic church under divine leadership is pictured as a white horse whose rider wore a victor’s crown and went forth “conquering, and to conquer” in the world-embracing gospel mission. See Revelation 6:2. In the nineteenth chapter, Christ is pictured as a conquering general leading the army of heaven in the final assault against the hosts of evil, resulting in the complete conquest of this rebel world.

Satan is the generalissimo of the opposing forces, and the warfare is as real as any war fought between nations. Upon the outcome of the conflict depends the destiny of the world. The most detailed and graphic description of this spiritual warfare, embracing more than seven millenniums of time, is found in Ephesians 6:10-17. Here we are warned against “the stratagems of the devil” (Weymouth) which can be met and resisted only by “the sword of the Spirit” and “the whole armor of God.” A stratagem is “a shrewd maneuver designed to deceive or outwit the enemy

—a clever trick or device to obtain an advantage —the art of plotting or contriving so as to mislead.”

This great strategist is therefore called the deceiver of the whole world, and we are warned, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8. In this series of daily battles against “wicked spirits in high places” organized into principalities, that which brings final triumph over all “the wiles of the devil” is thus stated: “Therefore put on the complete armor of God, so that you may be able to stand your ground on the day of battle, and, having fought to the end, to remain victors on the field.” Ephesians 6:13, Weymouth.

The conflict here described is different in many respects from those against “flesh and blood.” Our Captain says to the soldiers of the cross: “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” He does the fighting and wins the victory and appropriates it to us as a gift. Recognizing that all credit belongs to Him, we can say with King David: “Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all.” 1 Chronicles 29:11.

This experience of the warriors in the army of the Lord is beautifully set forth in the hymn, “Victory Through Grace”:

Conquering now and still to conquer,
Rideth the King in His might,
Leading the host of all the faithful
Into the midst of the fight;
See them with courage advancing,
Clad in their brilliant array;
Shouting the name of their Leader,
Hear them exultingly say,
Not to the strong is the battle,
Not to the swift is the race,

Yet to the true and the faithful
Victory is promised through grace.

In order that all glory might be ascribed to Him alone, the Lord instructed ancient Israel that they would not need to conquer the Promised Land by use of military weapons, but that He would drive out the nations with hornets, plagues, and hailstones. Speaking of the conquest of Bashan, one writer said: "It was the Captain of the Lord's host who vanquished the enemies of His people; and He would have done the same thirty-eight years before, had Israel trusted in Him... . Not mighty giants nor walled cities, armed hosts nor rocky fortresses, could stand before the Captain of the Lord's host. The Lord led the army; the Lord discomfited the enemy; the Lord conquered in behalf of Israel." — Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 435, 436.

This truth was beautifully illustrated in the capture of Jericho. The plan of battle was such that no soldier of Israel could claim any credit whatever for victory, which depended wholly upon faith and complete obedience to the divine command. It was victory, not through fighting, but through surrender, not to the enemy, but to God. If one warrior had lifted his hand or weapon against the city the glory of God would have been lessened and His will frustrated. The record is: "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days." Hebrews 11:30. Faith is taking God at His word with no other evidence in sight.

Another Old Testament record of victory through faith is found in the experience of King Jehoshaphat, recorded in 2 Chronicles 20. Facing overwhelming enemy forces, the godly king said to the Israelites: "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.... Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you." Then was done the strangest thing in all the history of warfare. The choir was sent "before the army," singing, "Praise the Lord; for His mercy endureth forever," and the songs of Zion brought confusion to the enemy, resulting in their ignominious defeat. What must have been the thoughts of the soldiers of this vast army as they saw musicians instead of warriors approaching and

heard singing instead of the clash of material weapons? Perhaps such a procedure today would accomplish more for world peace than the use of guns, grenades, and tanks, or even atomic bombs.

The New Testament contains much instruction concerning the secret of victory. In fact, the spiritual battle itself is called “the good fight of faith.” This indicates that the fighting is done by another, and the victory is ours only on the basis of faith. The apostle said: “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again, of the Great Emancipator he said: “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver.” Because this deliverance is past, present, and future, he also said: “Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savor of His knowledge by us in every place.” See 1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 1:10; 2:14. “Always” and “in every place” are promises of triumph which should satisfy every Christian. Another apostle wrote: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” 1 John 5:4. This is true and lasting world conquest, which brings permanent peace.

As strange and paradoxical as it may seem, victory in this great spiritual conflict is the result of surrender. “Yield yourselves unto the Lord,” is the inspired counsel to ancient Israel; and Paul said: “Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” With Christ there is no such thing as failure or defeat. He has fought over and defeated the great enemy on every battlefield, and His victory is ours as a gift by faith. Because Satan has conquered humanity, we are a defeated race; but Christ has conquered him, and he is therefore a defeated foe. We are no match for him, but he is no match for Christ, who is “a strong tower,” and “the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” The enemy trembles and flees before the weakest saint who finds refuge in His mighty name.

This complete triumph in Christ is beautifully expressed in the following statements: “We cannot save ourselves from the tempter’s power; he has conquered humanity, and when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices.” “When the soul

surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan.” —Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 131, 323, 324

Chapter 21 – Serpents and Doves

Another of the paradoxical sayings of Jesus is recorded in Matthew 10:16: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” “Remember it is I who am sending you out, as sheep into the midst of wolves; prove yourselves as sagacious as serpents, and as innocent as doves” is the Weymouth translation. “Guileless like doves.” (Moffatt.)

Sagacious is defined as being “ready and keen to apprehend and decide with wisdom on the best course; able to discern and distinguish with wise perception.” Disraeli said of a certain diplomat: “Too sagacious to be deceived by anyone, even himself.” The latter half of the statement of Jesus was a well-known proverbial maxim among the Jews. Ancient Jewish writings say: “The holy blessed God said to the Israelites, Ye shall be toward Me as upright as doves; but toward the Gentiles, as cunning as serpents.”

In all ages the serpent has been the symbol of subtlety, cunning, and shrewdness. Perhaps one reason is the statement in Genesis 3:1: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” “Now the serpent was cunning, more cunning than any creature that God the Eternal had made” is Moffatt’s translation. “As the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety” is an expression in 2 Corinthians 11:3. “As the serpent in his craftiness deceived Eve” is Weymouth’s translation.

Because the serpent was the creature used by Satan to deceive Eve, it became the symbol of the great deceiver. “That old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, ... deceiveth the whole world” is a statement in

Revelation 12:9. In ancient Egypt the likeness of a serpent was coiled around the throne of the pharaoh as the emblem of eternity and wisdom. Jesus used the serpent in His paradoxical statement as the symbol of prudence, mental alertness, and keenness of observation.

On the other hand, the dove is the symbol of innocence, harmlessness, and simplicity, even stupidity. In Hosea 7:11 we read “Ephraim is like a silly, senseless dove, crying to Egypt, flying to Assyria.” (Moffatt.) Doves are guileless and strangers to deceit, policy, politics, diplomacy, schemes, or ulterior motives. The dove is therefore used as a type of Christ, along with the lamb, in the sacrificial offerings of the Levitical service. The dove was also used as the emblem of the Holy Spirit at the time of the baptism of Jesus.

The serpent and the dove are as different in nature as sheep and wolves. The serpent eyes the dove with evil intent and covetous desire, and the dove looks at the serpent with fascinated terror. But the combination of prudence and sagacity in the serpent on the one hand, and the innocence and simplicity of the dove on the other, are essential to Christian character building in the wolfish environment in which we live. The serpentine characteristics alone would lead to rascality, and the dovelike nature alone would lead to gullibility. We all need both in proper proportions to keep us from villainy on the one hand, and credulity on the other.

There is something lacking in the character that does not possess in balanced form the combination of both these characteristics. “The combination of wariness and innocence is necessary for the protection of the sheep and the discomfiture of the wolves,” declared A. T. Roberson in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. A serpentlike subtlety is safe only when balanced by a dovelike gentleness of disposition. There must be a balancing of the mind and heart, of the intellect and the emotions, of the cold and calculating reasoning of the philosopher and the wild ravings of the fanatic.

This needed combination is beautifully set forth in *A Commentary*, by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown: “Wonderful combination this! Alone, the

wisdom of the serpent is mere cunning, and the harmlessness of the dove little better than weakness: but in combination, the wisdom of the serpent would save them from unnecessary exposure to danger; the harmlessness of the dove, from sinful expedients to escape it. In the apostolic age of Christianity, how harmoniously were these qualities displayed! Instead of the fanatical thirst for martyrdom, to which a later age gave birth, there was a manly combination of unflinching zeal and calm discretion, before which nothing was able to stand.”

The apostle Paul said in his letter to the Romans: “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” Romans 16:19. He was virtually quoting the statement of Jesus. “Behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves” is the statement of Jesus recorded in Luke 10:3. Sheep and lambs are the most helpless and defenseless of all animals. On the other hand, wolves are cruel, cunning, and savage. They are the natural enemies of sheep and lambs, with feet swift in the run for their prey, and fangs thirsting for the blood of their victims.

Worldlings are often wolfish and hostile and cruel. They hate the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ, and pursue them unto the death. Persecution and martyrdom have always been the lot of genuine Christians. Paul declared that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:12. See also John 15:18-20. The wolves usually go into the midst of the sheep; but Jesus said, “I send you ... in the midst of wolves.” He virtually said: I who know from experience the consequences, send you forth into imminent danger —into the midst of unfriendly enemies who will hate and persecute you, but “be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

The wolf nature is always evil. It does not naturally change for the better, but rather for the worse. The sheep of God’s own flock can become “lost sheep” and develop the wolf nature as did the Jews who persecuted and crucified their own Messiah. Jesus spoke of “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But through the miracle-working power of the gospel the wolf nature can be changed to the divine nature. Until its nature has been changed, the wolf will act as a wolf, eat as a wolf, growl as a wolf, and

associate with wolves. Being dressed in “sheep’s clothing” does not change the character of a wolf. All depends on the nature or character. Each of us should ask the question, “Am I developing the snapping, snarling, growling characteristics of a wolf, or the gentle, innocent, and Christlike nature of a lamb?” Upon the answer to this question depends our eternal destiny.

Chapter 22 - The Virtue of Discontent

Another paradox of the Scriptures is in the emphasis placed on the value of contentment and the virtue of discontent at the same time. This seeming contradiction, however, reveals truths which we especially need to consider in this age of anxiety and complacency, if we would develop symmetrical characters.

In the first place, the contentment which produces serenity, patience, and composure is not only vitally important, but is absolutely necessary to success and happiness. It makes life easier and more worthwhile. Socrates said: 'Contentment is natural wealth; luxury is artificial poverty.' When soldiers came to John the Baptist with the question, 'What shall we do?' he answered: "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages." Luke 3:14. Such counsel would be very unpopular and even distasteful in this age when discontent with wages is almost universal. Labor leaders would condemn such instruction with withering sarcasm.

It is evident that the apostle Paul knew the secret of contentment: "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Philippians 4:11. This and other statements indicate that he mastered this subject in the school of experience: "I have learned how to be content wherever I am. I know how to live humbly: I also know how to live in prosperity. I have been initiated into the secret for all sorts of conditions of life, for plenty and for hunger, for prosperity and for privations. In Him who strengthens me I am able for anything." Verses 11-13, Moffatt.

Paul said: "Godliness with contentment is great gain... . And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." 1 Timothy 6:8-8. The chief secret of this godly contentment is given in the following statement: "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Hebrews 13:5. How much such contentment is needed in this generation of stress and strain, of anxiety and dissatisfaction! Mankind in general is as restless as the waves of the sea.

On the other hand, there is a form of contentment which is the deadly foe of growth, progress, and development, and is therefore anything but virtuous. In fact, it may even lead to defeat and disaster. The results of such complacency by Moab are described in Jeremiah 48:11, 12. Because this ancient nation was "at ease from his youth" and "hath settled on his lees," and had never known captivity or change, there developed a spirit of contentment which brought eventual ruin. There are times when the situation demands that something be done to bring about a change; when easygoing complacency can no longer be tolerated. There is always a danger that contentment will give place to apathy, torpidity, or even insensibility. Discontent is absolutely necessary to advancement in any line. Only those who become disillusioned in regard to the broad way which ends in eternal death, will "strive to enter in at the strait gate" which leads to eternal life. Dissatisfaction alone can change the thinking, direction, and destination. Altogether too many people are like the farmer who said to a speaker advocating better methods in agriculture: "Don't tell me how to farm any better. I don't farm as well now as I know how."

Those who are perfectly satisfied with the *status quo* should be prepared for stagnation and the fossilization which knows no change. Without a feeling of disappointment over the achievements of the past, and an urge to go on to greater heights in the future, students will fail to obtain knowledge, and artists, musicians, teachers, physicians, and clergymen will remain mediocre. Every reformation has had its source and inspiration in discontent over prevailing conditions. Moses renounced the throne of Egypt and forsook a life of ease and luxury, pomp and political

power, because of holy discontent. He could not be satisfied while his people were a race of slaves under the lash of their cruel taskmasters.

Virtuous discontent is the great incentive for better things. Ezra, Nehemiah, and Zerubbabel could not be content while Jerusalem and the holy temple lay in ruins. They went into action, and the whole world knows of their achievements. Can any Christian be satisfied with the present world after getting a view of the world to come? A vision of the perfect new-earth state through the telescope of prophecy and the eyes of faith will make the present evil world seem dark and dreary.

Are you satisfied with the present life and conditions? If so, you will spend no time seeking for the life which is more abundant, or looking for “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Of the faithful of all the past ages we read: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.... But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.” Hebrews 11:13-16. The number is declared to be “so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable.” Verse 12. These were all discontented with the present world.

Are you content with your present degree of knowledge and wisdom? If so, all further progress is at an end. Are you satisfied with your present state of character development? Then you cannot possibly make any further growth. In fact, disintegration has already begun. Are you content with your past spiritual attainments? Then you fall under the terrible indictment of Christ in His message to modern Christendom revealed in Revelation 3:14-22. The present state of spiritual complacency and self-satisfaction is very distasteful to our divine Lord. He is even nauseated by the lukewarmness of those who boast that they are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,” when they are actually “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,” and therefore

in desperate need of that which He alone can supply. He offers a complete remedy.

There is nothing so displeasing to Christ or so dangerous to the church as pride, complacency, self-sufficiency, and listless indifference. Of all conditions these are the most hopeless and incurable. It is the same spirit of Pharisaism with which Jesus had to contend. He was unable to help the self-righteous leaders and people who felt that they needed no physician and were therefore not healed. They were so blind that they failed to recognize their own Messiah. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." They crucified Him instead. They did not want a new element to disturb their religious thinking or to interfere with their set forms and ceremonies. They were too contented to make the changes necessary to their salvation. Shall we profit by their mistake? Are we willing to know that type of discontent that is essential to progress so that we may eventually experience the joy of the perfect contentment that will characterize life in the kingdom of glory?

Chapter 23 – It Pays to be Absent-Minded

Doubtless this topic sounds very strange and leaves the impression that it was chosen during a spell of absent-mindedness. But it is another of the many Bible paradoxes in which things are not always what they seem to be. Wise old Solomon thus warned against being absent-minded: “The wise man’s eyes are in his head,” “but the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.” Ecclesiastes 2:14; Proverbs 17:24. “Eyes” as here used could properly be translated “mind” or “thoughts.” It is a severe condemnation of that which has never been considered a virtue, but has rather been attributed to loose and careless thinking by visionary men and women, and which has contributed nothing of value in human welfare and progress.

The emphasis during the ages has been on the virtue of concentration of thought, and the weakness of absent-mindedness. We have been told that the mind must be constantly girded and guarded and barricaded if we would excel in wisdom and success in life. Just as the rolling stone gathers no moss, so the wandering mind gathers no knowledge. Teachers, preachers, and lecturers know what it means to deal with wandering minds, for many in every class or audience hear and absorb only a part of what is said.

Nevertheless, we owe a great deal to absent-mindedness of the right kind. In fact, it is a great virtue and an invaluable asset. It is the secret of growth and development and progress in every realm of life. It is indeed wonderful that the mind can be absent from the body and make excursions into the far-distant past or future, or to the ends of the earth, and then return with a store of valuable information so essential to

success; to depart from the immediate surroundings and environments and be away on business or pleasure. Only the absent-minded can escape from the petty and trivial things of this mundane life and deal with long-range affairs of major importance. It would be well if the mind could occasionally hang a sign on the forehead, saying, “Away on important business.” To the virtue of this kind of thinking we owe almost everything worth while.

The Greek mathematician Archimedes forgot his bath and food while his mind was away discovering specific gravity in order that all future generations might be benefited. It was because his body attempted to catch up with his absent mind that Columbus sailed into the hitherto impenetrable unknown and discovered the New World. Other absent-minded adventurers followed him and established new nations, including our own. He also demonstrated that the earth is a globe, and thus helped change the thinking of mankind. Sir Isaac Newton let his mind wander as the result of seeing an apple fall to the ground, and his thoughts returned with the law of gravitation. The dreams of Thomas Edison were translated into realities by his inventive genius, and a new age was ushered in.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” is a Biblical statement of fact in regard to prophetic and spiritual vision, or any other kind of farsighted absent-mindedness. Only such a vision can comprehend the eternity of the future and grasp the realities of the world to come. On one occasion the mind of the apostle Paul left his body and made an excursion into “the third heaven,” the heaven of heavens where dwells the Eternal, and the journey seemed so real he could not tell whether he was “in the body” or “out of the body.” There he heard “unspeakable words” which he was not permitted to repeat. See 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

In vision the mind of the prophet Daniel made journeys to distant places, and even spanned centuries and millenniums of time through the rise and fall of great empires to the second coming of Christ to set up His “everlasting kingdom,” which “shall stand forever.” The emperor Diocletian attempted to destroy the testimony of the apostle John by confining him to the lonely Isle of Patmos, but John’s mind was still free,

and it raced across the waters of the Aegean Sea to the mainland and to the churches of Asia and on into the future to the close of time. He wrote the Apocalypse, which has proved to be of manifold greater blessing to the church militant than his personal ministry could have been. All the prophets and apostles were absent-minded men of vision.

To the Colossian church members the apostle Paul wrote: "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit," or mind. Colossians 2:5. To others he said that he was taken from them for a short time "in presence" but "not in heart." 1 Thessalonians 2:17. "Out of sight, not out of mind" is the Moffatt translation. This kind of absent-mindedness is absolutely vital to the very existence of Christianity.

To every baptized person the counsel is given: "If ye 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." Colossians 3:1, 2. "Mind" is the marginal reading for "affection." "Set your minds on things that are above" is the Revised Standard Version reading, and "Give your minds to the things that are above, not to the things that are on the earth" is the Weymouth. This calls for absent-mindedness of the first magnitude.

The modern world is greatly in need of more of this kind of experience. Ours is a selfish age; too much thinking is centered in self and selfish interests, rather than on others and their needs. A man once said of a self-centered woman that her mind never did get an inch away from her own body. The man who falls in love with himself will have no rivals. This is because self-love is always obnoxious to others. The egocentric is therefore a lonely man because his very pride shuts him away from others. In 2 Timothy 3:1-5 we are given a picture of our own generation, which is made "perilous" by proud, boastful, heady, and high-minded men who are 'lovers of their own selves,' and therefore by the lack of absent-mindedness of the noble variety. The Pharisee in the temple had his mind centered on self instead of absent on God. The publican had a vision of God and therefore abhorred himself.

The secret of selflessness and the remedy for self-centered thinking is set forth in Philippians 2:3-5: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The minds of those who carry out this instruction will be continually absent and the vacuum filled with the mind of Christ, and thus they will be like Him in thoughts, words, and conduct.

May we all learn to gird up the loins of our minds in concentrated thinking on those things which are character building, while at the same time they are absent in search for all that is good and noble on earth as well as what is reserved for us in heaven. The Christian alone can be nearsighted enough to recognize his own condition and needs, and farsighted enough to see the needs of all mankind in all parts of the earth. His vision should comprehend eternity. He is able to see the invisible because "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." His eyes "see the King in His beauty," and his mind is upon "the land of far distances." He lives by faith in the realms of light, and his heart and mind are upon the eternal treasure. This is the form of absent-mindedness which will assuredly bring an exceeding great and eternal reward.

Chapter 24 – Living Stones

The apostle Peter declared that Christ is “a living stone” and that His people are also “lively stones” who “are built up a spiritual house” with a “holy priesthood” who “offer up spiritual sacrifices” which are “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” He then quotes from Psalm 118:22, 23 and Isaiah 28:16 to show that Jesus fulfilled these Old Testament Messianic prophecies not only because He was tried and precious and a chief cornerstone, but also because He was “a stone of stumbling” and “a rock of offense” who was “disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God.” See 1 Peter 2:4-8.

Jesus also quoted Isaiah 28:16 to His accusers to convince them that was their Messiah: “Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?” Matthew 21:42. The text in the Old Testament reads: “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.”

The erection of Solomon’s temple was a type of the building of God’s spiritual temple, the church of all the ages, which has been under construction ever since the plan of redemption has been in operation, reaching back to the fall of man and the first gospel promise. All of God’s people upon the earth from the beginning to the end of time constitute one body or church, of which Christ has been the Head. In fact, one well-known writer declared that “the church of God below is one with the church of God above,” so that “believers on earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church.”

Solomon's temple was designed and built under divine direction. God was both the Architect and Master Builder because it was typical of His church on earth and His temple in heaven. The most costly and magnificent structure ever reared by human hands could give but a faint reflection of the vastness and glory of the abiding place of the King of kings, where thousands minister unto Him and ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Him. Years ago modern architects figured that it would take eighty-seven billion dollars to reproduce Solomon's temple with all its vessels and furniture.

"The stone which the builders disallowed," "disallowed indeed of men" because it was "a rock of offense" and "a stone of stumbling," has reference to an incident in the building of the temple. All the stones were shaped and hewed in the quarries so that in the erection there was no sound of hammer or ax or any other tool. But the builders could find no place in the foundations for one rock of immense size, and for a long time it was in their way as a stumbling stone and "rock of offense." It was finally discovered that it was the "chief cornerstone" in the foundation, where it fulfilled a very important mission.

Most of the foundation was solid native or "living" rock, but one corner had to be built up quite a distance with hewn stones. In 1 Kings 5:17 we are told: "The king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house." During the excavation of this part of the foundation a few years ago under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, stones of immense size were uncovered, one being thirty-eight feet long and weighing one hundred tons. We do not know how it was put in place, as lifting it would tax even the heaviest of modern machinery.

Greek students tell us that the word "stone" in our texts does not refer to a native unhewn stone or rock, but rather to one that has been hewn or shaped or wrought and chosen for a specific place. The stone that became "the head of the corner" was symbolic of Christ, the Head, or chief foundation stone, of the spiritual temple or the church. The stone of itself was inadequate, as are all other symbols. It is estimated that there are

at least two hundred and fifty names and emblems of Christ in Scripture, and it takes all of them to describe fully the character and work of Him whose name is called “Wonderful.”

To make the metaphor more appropriate, Peter called Christ “a living stone.” This is a paradox, for a stone or rock belongs to the inanimate and inorganic, because it is dead and lifeless. In fact, what could possibly be more dead and lifeless, even though it is composed of moving and swirling atoms? Of course a stone or rock is a very appropriate symbol of strength, firmness, stability, and solidity. Jesus was therefore “a foundation stone,” something basic and fundamental. He was also “a tried stone,” tested in the crucible of fiery temptations. He was also “a precious cornerstone,” the Pearl of great price, the One “altogether lovely,” “the chiefest among ten thousand.” He is also “a sure foundation,” so that those who build thereon will never be ashamed or confounded or disappointed. He is “the Rock of Ages,” on which we can safely build. Jesus said: “Upon this Rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Christ is the Living Stone because He is “the Son of the living God” who has given us the living word which provides a living hope, and who has promised to take away “the stony heart” and give us “an heart of flesh.” Christ is “alive for evermore,” because He has life in Himself and is the source of all life. He said: “Because I live, ye shall live also.” The apostle John said: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” 1 John 5:12. Christ was the stone which, in King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, was cut out of the mountain without human hands and “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” The smitten rock in the wilderness from which flowed the water that quenched the thirst of the millions of Israel and their cattle, was a type of Christ. Paul declared that they “did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them [“went with them,” margin]: and that Rock was Christ.” 1 Corinthians 10:3, 4.

Because they are like Christ, Christians are declared to be “living stones” who are “built up” into “a spiritual house” or temple. This spiritual house is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone,” and it is “fitly framed together” and “groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord,” and becomes the “habitation of God through the Spirit.” See Ephesians 2:20-22. This temple has been growing since the entrance of sin, when the plan of redemption was set in operation. Only living things grow. Christians live and grow because the ever-living Christ lives in them. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” is the statement of Paul. He also declared that this development continues until we arrive “at mature manhood and the stature of full-grown men in Christ.” He also said: “But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.” Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13-15.

One of the greatest of missionaries carried the appropriate name of Livingstone, and he lived up to his name. The apostle Peter applies this name to all genuine Christians. This calls for life and zeal and activity and development. It cannot be properly applied to those who are “dead in trespasses and sins.” Only living stones can be built into a living temple on the foundation of the Living Stone. Of them it is said: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9.

Chapter 25 - “The Wrath of the Lamb”

One of the saddest prophetic pictures of the events to take place in connection with the second advent of Christ is given in Revelation 6:14-17. The unprepared and unsaved hide “themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains” and say “to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”

The language indicates that they have heard the message concerning the return of our Lord and recognize it as the event predicted by the prophets and heralded by a final warning message which is also prophetic. The question asked is answered in the following chapter. Only those who receive the seal of the living God will be protected during the day of God’s wrath and indignation when all men will be rewarded according to their works.

What language could be more strange and paradoxical and seemingly contradictory than to speak of “the wrath of the Lamb”? Of all living creatures, the lamb is the most patient, tolerant, gentle, tranquil, and even-tempered. It is an absolute stranger to anger, wrath, and retaliation. The lamb or sheep may be severely cut by the amateur shearer, or abused and even slaughtered, with no outcry or struggle or resistance. The lamb is therefore a type of Christ, who “was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” Isaiah 53:7. The apostle said that “when He was reviled” He “reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.” 1 Peter 2:23. During His unjust trials and crucifixion, Jesus showed not the least trace of anger or retaliation. He was “the Lamb of God” who died to atone for the sins of the world.

Furthermore, anger and wrath are severely condemned in the Scriptures as a species of sin over which victory must be gained. "Anger resteth in the bosom of fools," "Make no friendship with an angry man," and "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous" are sample Old Testament statements. Ecclesiastes 7:9; Proverbs 22:24; 27:4. Strong statements are also found in the New Testament: "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Ephesians 4:26, 31. "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth." Colossians 3:8.

"Wrath" is named as one of "the works of the flesh" of which it is said: "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:19-21. In fact, wrath is satanic because it is a characteristic of Satan. We are told that, as the result of Christ's Calvary victory, Satan came down to this earth "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time," and that in the final crisis he would be "wroth with the woman" or church and go forth "to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." "Furiously angry" are the words used in another translation. Revelation 12:12, 17. In 1 Peter 5:8 Christians are urged to be sober and vigilant "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." The illustration is that of an angry and savage lion.

Likewise the nations under satanic control are symbolized in prophecy as cruel and savage beasts of prey, including a great red dragon. It is the paradox of paradoxes that Satan's earthly kingdom, represented by a great red dragon, together with all his other powerful agencies, are finally defeated and destroyed by "the Lamb" when "the great day of His wrath is come." It seems incongruous that the Lamb could overcome the dragon, but it is true.

There is therefore a type of wrath that is justifiable. In fact, it is godly and Christlike and has been called "righteous indignation." There is a lawful and unselfish anger, just as there is a godly jealousy. The Bible

statement, “Be ye angry, and sin not,” indicates that there is a type of anger that is free from sin. Someone has said that Jesus had “a holy wrath against the prince of darkness.” On a few occasions Jesus manifested a “holy wrath” or “righteous indignation” during his earthly sojourn. Because of the narrow vision of the Jews which did not permit the healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, Jesus “looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.” He then asked the sufferer to stretch forth his hand. The man obeyed, and his hand was immediately restored. See Mark 3:1-5.

The righteous anger of Christ was again displayed on the occasion of the cleansing of the temple. The scene of unholy traffic in the sacred courts aroused His indignation, and for a few minutes divinity seemed to flash through the garb of humanity and the irreverent multitude stood as it were before the judgment seat of God. The small scourge of cords seemed to them like a flaming sword in His hand, and all rushed from the place with the one thought of escaping from the condemnation of His presence.

When Christ’s priestly ministry ceases and probation closes, divine wrath will take the place of mercy. It is then that the unsaved will call for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of God and “from the wrath of the Lamb.”

There are scores of texts of Scripture which speak of the day of God’s wrath and indignation. The following are a few samples from the Old Testament: In looking forward to the final time of trouble followed by the resurrection, Job said: “O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that Thou wouldest keep me secret, until Thy wrath be past, that Thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!” Job 14:13. Speaking of the same period and the advantage of sleeping in the grave until it is over, another prophet said: “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.” Isaiah 26:20. Another prophet, after describing the terror of the wicked in the day of the Lord,

said: “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath.” See Zephaniah 1:14-18.

In Revelation 8:2-5 is a picture of the priestly service in the heavenly temple. The censer is filled with “much incense,” which is offered “with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne,” indicating that the prayers of God’s people are very pleasing to Him when accompanied by faith in the righteousness of Christ. But there comes a time when the same censer is filled with fire, representing the wrath and judgments of an offended and righteously indignant God.

The same “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” through His atoning sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, will one day manifest His wrath and indignation against those who have spurned His mercy and sinned away their day of grace. While this is a paradox, it is not a contradiction, nor does it reflect on the character and mission of Christ. It is one of the many exhibitions of His love, and reveals a truth so glorious that through all the eternal ages of the future it will be commemorated in “the song of the Lamb,” which will never grow old, and never, never die.