July to September 2012

July 1 to August 3:

Spurgeon's "Morning & Evening" (Part 4)

(Transcribed)

August 4 to September 30:

"Warnings for the End-Time"

About the Author

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THE LOVINGKINDNESS OF GOD

Ponder the marvellous lovingkindness of our loving Father in Heaven. He bestows us favours with lovingkindness from His great loving heart. From His royal table, He sends us not the leftover bits and pieces, but the best portion out of His own dish. When He puts the golden tokens of His grace into our palms, He presses home the gift with such warmth of the hand, that the manner of the giving is as precious as the gift itself.

When He visits our homes, He does not act like some condescending dignitary in a poor man's cottage, but He sits with us and sups with us as Friend with friend. See how He addresses us, not sternly or indifferently, but with a gracious smile and a tender tone. Thus He turns our hearts to Himself, with words of gold from His gracious lips. What affection does He bestow upon us! Every gift from Him is precious beyond words.

It is impossible to doubt the genuineness of His benefactions and the sincerity of His charity, for every gift and communication is stamped with the seal of His own precious blood. To all who ask, He giveth liberally and without restraint or rebuke, with not one hint that we are burdensome to Him, nor a cold look as for aliens and foreigners! Our Lord rejoices in mercy and delights in liberality, for *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Rom 8:32).

O the rare communion which our Heavenly Father shares with us! May we continually taste and enjoy this divine blessedness from the heart of our loving God.

THOUGHT: God always gives of His best.
PRAYER: Lord, may I return thanks also with my best.

MONDAY, JULY 2
HOSEA 11:1-8
EPHESIANS 1:3-11 *Love is of God.*

"I DREW THEM WITH BANDS OF LOVE"

The initiative is always with God: He makes the first move. We love Him because He first loved us. He drew us with bands of love, while we were aliens, strangers and foreigners. But how backward we are to run to Him! We respond to His gentle impulses all too slowly, but He is ever so patient with us.

He calls us to exercise a more simple faith in Him, even the faith of Abraham who did not shrink back from offering his son, Isaac. Our meagre faith brings leanness to our souls; we neglect to open wide our mouths, though God promised He would fill them with good things.

Does He not daily long for us to come to Him, to put all our trust in Him? Can you not hear Him say, "Come, my child, the veil is rent and the new and living way is opened; enter into my presence. Come boldly unto my throne of grace. I am thy exceeding great reward, and worthy of thy fullest confidence. Cast upon me thy load of worries and cares; put on these beautiful garments of joy."

Such is our Father's heart of love. He draws us to closer communion with Himself. Some come and hesitate at the doorstep. He bids all to advance to His royal banqueting hall. Within the Father's House are yet rooms filled with hidden treasures. Our Lord bids us to enter. We are unworthy even to be servants, but He calls us to be His bride, to be His bone and flesh.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

THOUGHT: There is no greater love than God's love.
PRAYER: Teach me to love as Thou dost love.

"O TASTE AND SEE"

David, the inspired Psalmist, knew what it was to be a fugitive fleeing from the wrath of man; what it was to be in deep trouble. In all his troubles he had put his trust in the Lord, and the Lord had proved wholly trustworthy. Listen to David's testimony: *"This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"* (Ps 34:6-7).

Christians in today's modern world may experience modern problems, but the solution to all of our problems is in David's Lord, and ours. Modern men have not discovered a modern way of salvation or source of help. For those who are in trouble, and all who need help, the same Lord who saved David is still available, and ready to help. To us, the Word says, *"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him"* (Ps 34:8-9).

Do not rest, dear reader, till you have received from Jesus the full assurance of His salvation grace. Let nothing satisfy you till the blessed Holy Spirit bears witness with your spirit that you are a child of God. Read again Psalm 34 and pray the Lord to give you the sure mercies of David. The Lord who helped him will help you no less. Only trust Him wholly. And you too will say, *"O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together"* (Ps 34:3). O taste and see that the Lord is good!

THOUGHT: I think of my blessed Redeemer; I think of Him all the day long.
PRAYER: Bless the Lord, O my soul.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4
GENESIS 42:1-8
MATTHEW 6:25-34 *God supplies bread daily.*

"THERE IS CORN IN EGYPT"

Famine casts its dark shadow over all the nations. Jacob and his family were in trouble. But God did not forget them, the objects of His electing love. Long before the devastating famine, the Lord had already made preparation for the salvation of His people, by sending Joseph to become Governor of all Egypt. As he made himself known to his brethren he said, *"God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance"* (Gen 45:7).

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Rom 11:33-34). God permitted the wicked brothers to sell Joseph into slavery in Egypt; but God's way is past finding out! The way of the pit led through prison to the palace! For who hath known the mind of the Lord?

For Jacob it was a double deliverance. First, he regained the son of his love, for whom he had mourned and grieved, believing him to be dead. Second, he found deliverance from the famine. His son, Joseph, had all the corn in the world! These were all because of God's promised electing love. What lesson can we learn in all this? Our Lord Jesus says, *"Behold the fowls of the air ... your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"* (Matt 6:26). You are so much more precious than sparrows!

God has "corn in Egypt" enough to sustain every one of His hungry needy children.

THOUGHT: But seek ye first the kingdom of God.
PRAYER: Help me to trust Thee in all circumstances.

"HE LED THEM FORTH"

Unhappy experience makes the anxious believer ask, "Why is it so with me?" I looked for light, but all was dark; for peace, but only trouble came. I said in my heart, my mountain standeth firm, I shall never be moved. Lord, Thou dost hide Thy face, and I am troubled. It was only yesterday that I could see the way clearly. Today, everything is dim, and my hopes are clouded. Yesterday, I climbed to the top of Mt Pisgah, and viewed my future inheritance. Today, my spirit is troubled with many fears.

So I ask, "Is this God's plan for me? Can this be the way God is leading me to Heaven?" Yes, so it is. The way may be gloomy, the future clouded with uncertainty. All these are part of God's method of equipping us for the great inheritance to which we will be admitted soon. Trials are for the testing and strengthening of our faith. According to David's words, may it be so with us: *"So he bringeth them unto their desired haven"* (Ps 107:30). God knows the better way – the right way.

By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, by plenty and by poverty, by joy and by distress, by persecution and by peace – through all these things, our God leads us onward and forward. Oh think not, dear believer, that sorrows are excluded from God's plan. They are necessary parts of it. We must through much tribulation, enter the Kingdom. Say with Job, *"But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10).

THOUGHT: To know that the Lord is leading is greatest comfort.
PRAYER: Jesus still leads on, till the rest be won.

"THOU ART FAIR, MY BELOVED"

Jesus, our beloved Redeemer, is most fair. Every life experience is meant by our Heavenly Father to furnish new standpoints to view the loveliness of Jesus. How amiable even are our trials which bear us upward in prayer and supplication, and there we gain a clearer view of the Lord. At times, we are laid low on a sick-bed, yea, even the death-bed, and there we turn our eyes to the Lover of our souls, and He looks fairer than ever.

Many of His saints have looked upon Him from the gloom of dungeon depths, or from the midst of crackling flames, yet they have never seen a more lovely Saviour who ever remains faithful and fair. Thank God, He is the altogether lovely One under any and all circumstances. Oh the pleasant and blessed enjoyment of gazing on the "fairest of ten thousand."

Then think of Jesus in the manger, Jesus treading the Judean countryside, walking on the sea, calming the storm, commanding the wind and waves, praying in the garden, accused before Pilate, buffeted by the soldiers, crucified between thieves, pouring out His life for you and me – in every scene we see Him, the altogether lovely One.

Finally, see Jesus risen from the tomb, appearing to the eleven, and breathing on them the Holy Spirit, saying, *"Peace be unto you!"* How lovely the ever living Lord Jesus, with nail prints in His hands and feet, and spear scar in His side. This same Jesus, our beloved Redeemer, one day soon, will return to earth – KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS! Beloved and fair to them who love His appearing.

THOUGHT: To them who are saved, He is altogether lovely.
PRAYER: I thank Thee for Thou art also merciful and gracious.

"THE LORD WILL PERFECT"

The Psalmist in Psalm 138:8 speaks of a ***divine confidence.*** He did not say, "I have grace enough to perfect that which concerneth me; my faith is so steady that I will never fall; my love is so warm that it will never grow cold; my resolve is so strong that nothing can ever move it." No, the Psalmist was speaking of his dependence and confidence in the Lord alone. Any confidence not founded on the Rock of Ages is on shifting sand: at the slightest testing, it will fall apart.

The Psalmist rested upon nothing but the Lord and His finished work. He who has begun a good work in us will perfect it at His coming again. What we could not achieve in all of this life, He will complete on that day. Until that day, we press toward the mark and look toward Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Our hope and trust is in Jesus alone. Then beware the tempter's attacks: "You will never be able to stand. Look at your evil heart, you can never conquer sin. My worldly attractions and carnal temptations will ensnare and trap you, and you will lose your salvation!"

But you and I trust not in ourselves or our own strength. Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. He began the good work in us. Surely He will not let us down along the way. We press on therefore, looking only unto Jesus. He will perfect that which concerneth you and me – for His own name's sake.

THOUGHT: The Lord has my interest at heart.
PRAYER: Lord, Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.

SOW SPARINGLY, REAP SPARINGLY

In Old Testament times, worshippers would normally bring sweet perfumes to be offered upon the altar. But Israel, backslidden and ungrateful, withheld that which was the Lord's, their heart being cold toward God and His house. What happened with Israel prevails among God's people today. Do Isaiah's words apply to you? *"Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money."*

This raises the matter of offering to the Lord. How much should we give? How should we give? It is not the amount that counts, but the heart behind the giving. Those who are poor in pocket but rich in faith are accepted even though their gifts are small. The widow's mite represented "all her living," all her income; she offered all to the Lord. The rich believer is entrusted with abundance by the Lord. He has the larger responsibility to give unto the Lord in proportion to what he has received. *"... For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required ..."* (Lk 12:48).

Giving is a measure of our gratitude unto the Lord. O forget not His benefits toward us. Our Lord shed His blood to give us eternal life, to make this life worth living and meaningful. With His blood He bought us; we are not our own, but the Lord's. Giving is a measure of our consecration for His Gospel's sake. If my offering will speed the extension of the Gospel work, let me not hold back, but let me joyfully and liberally return thanks unto the Lord.

If the Lord has prospered you, give Him your tithe (one-tenth) and your love gift beside. Let it be a measure of your love toward the Lord.

THOUGHT: Sow bountifully, reap bountifully.
PRAYER: Teach me to give as Thou hast given.

"IN EVERY THING BY PRAYER"

The spiritual Christian has cause to weep over his prayer life. How often our prayers are mere cold routines. Our closet prayers should be like Jacob's "all night wrestling" with God. But alas! They are so faint and feeble – far removed from Jacob's soul-hot, believing, persevering faith which cried, *"I will not let thee go, except thou bless me"* (Gen 32:26).

Yet we marvel that God has heard our cold prayers, and not only heard, but answered them. Reflect also how infrequent has been our praying, except when we are in trouble, and then we go often to the mercy-seat. But when deliverance has come, was there not a lapse back to our cold complacency again? And notwithstanding our relapse, God has not ceased to bless. Oh! It is truly marvellous that the Lord should condescend to our inconsistencies and want of fervent spirit in prayer.

Today, let us come before the Lord and confess our sins of cold-heartedness, our lukewarmness, and our listlessness in prayer. Come to the Garden of Gethsemane and let us spend a time contemplating our Lord's praying to the Father, how He fell on His face and being in agony He prayed earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground. May God's Spirit instil in us the spirit of fervent prayer.

Then let us go often to the throne of grace, and there agonize before the Lord, that He will heal and restore us. In every thing by prayer and supplication, let our requests be made known unto God. May God help us to persevere in this vital aspect of our spiritual growth.

THOUGHT: *"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (James 5:16).
PRAYER: Lord, lift me up to a higher plane in prayer.

CONVERSATION AND GOSPEL

The word *"conversation"* does not merely mean our talk and converse with one another. It includes the whole course of our life and conduct, the actions and privileges of citizenship. Thus we are commanded to let our actions as citizens of God's Kingdom be consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

What sort of conversation is this? Firstly, the Gospel is very simple, so Christians should be simple and plain in their way of life. Our manner, our speech, our dress, our make-up, our behaviour and our appearance should reflect the godly simplicity of the Gospel. The Gospel is pre-eminently true, "gold without dross." So should the Christian's life be true and transparent, without deception and without hypocrisy.

The Gospel speaks the message and mind of God without fear, whether men like it or not. Christians must be bold, fearless and unflinching in presenting the Gospel. But the Gospel is also very gentle. It was written of our Lord, *"A bruised reed shall he not break"* (Isa 42:3). Followers of Jesus must not be sharp and critical and abrasive. Let us seek to win others by the gentleness and graciousness of our words and actions.

Then the Gospel is very loving. It is the message of God's love for a lost humanity. Let us show more love and tender compassion even for the worst and vilest of men. Finally, the Gospel is holy: it never excuses or accommodates sin. The Christian's life should reflect that holiness of God as seen in the life of Jesus Christ. So let our conversation reflect the Gospel in every way.

THOUGHT: Be an ambassador for Christ.
PRAYER: Mould me and make me after Thy will.

"FORSAKE ME NOT, O LORD"

This prayer is good for all occasions, and not merely in the hour of trial. There is no moment of life, however holy, in which we do not need the Lord's upholding. Whether in light or darkness, in times of ease or in temptation, we do well to pray, *"Forsake me not, O LORD"* (Ps 38:23). A little child learning to walk always needs the mother's aid. Without her, mishaps will occur. So it is with the Christian. We need continual help from above.

Let our prayer for today be: "Forsake me not. Father in Heaven, leave not Thy child alone, lest he fall by the hand of the enemy. O Shepherd of the flock, forsake not Thy lamb, lest he stray from the safety of the fold. Great Husbandman, forsake not Thy vineyard, lest the plants wither and die. Forsake me not, O Lord, at any time. Forsake me not in times of joy, lest they absorb my heart; forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against Thee; forsake me not in the day of my contrition, lest I fall into despair; forsake me not in the day of "strong faith," lest I fall into presumption.

Forsake me not in all my earthly life, for without Thee I can do nothing. The pathway is fraught with dangers and pitfalls. Without Thee I would fall. Be ever so close to me, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Forsake me not, O Lord. O my God, be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. In Thee do I put my trust."

THOUGHT: In Matthew 28:20, Jesus said, *"I am with you alway."*
PRAYER: Jesus, keep me near Thy side.

"THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED"

The Christian faith stands or falls on this one critical vital fundamental doctrine: Did Jesus rise bodily from the grave? Or was it a hallucination? Or only spiritual resurrection? Or no resurrection at all? Did Jesus remain in the tomb to rot like any other man?

The modern Church has denied the resurrection. The Emmaus Road account is discounted, dismissed and denied. But we read with faith and in our mind's eye we see the two disciples suddenly transformed, recharged with heavenly energy, hurrying back all the way to Jerusalem to share the eyewitness evidence: *"The Lord is risen indeed"* (Luke 24:34). Why, He talked with us all the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus. He expounded the Scriptures concerning His suffering, crucifixion and resurrection. Then, He revealed Himself by the breaking of bread. The prophecy of Scripture is true, fulfilled before our eyes! Our Lord Jesus is alive, risen from the dead!

Then read Luke 24:36-48 for more eyewitness descriptions of our Lord's appearing, speaking, showing His nail-scarred hands and feet, eating physical food with the disciples, and giving them final instructions for establishing the Church. Finally, read Paul's epistle to the Corinthian Church (1 Cor 15:1-8). The evidence is not lacking, only men blinded by the god of this world will not see, *"... lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ ... should shine unto them"* (2 Cor 4:4).

Because Christ lives, we who are *"in Christ"* shall also be made alive.

THOUGHT: If Christ did not rise we are of all men most miserable.
PRAYER: O Lord Jesus, I thank Thee for rising for me.

FRIDAY, JULY 13
PSALM 55:16-23
LUKE 12:22-31 *Anxiety robs our peace.*

"CAST THY BURDEN UPON THE LORD"

Excessive care and anxiety is a sin. Our Saviour has clear teaching that Christians should avoid anxious care and undue worry. The apostles taught the same. Let us ponder the causes for this common ailment.

The very essence of anxious care is the idea that we are wiser than God and we must help Him do that which He has promised to do for us. We fancy that our God may be forgetful or unable, and we can do better. This is plain disobedience and unbelief. When we intrude upon His province, we sin. He who will not leave his affairs in God's hands, but chooses to carry his own burden, will likely employ wrong means to help himself. He will likely forsake the Lord his Counsellor, and resort to human wisdom. Instead of drinking at the Lord's "Fountain," he resorts to man's "broken cistern" – Israel's sin of bygone days.

Anxiety makes us doubt God's loving kindness, causing our love for Him to grow cold; thus we grieve the Spirit of God. Anxiety leads to distrust and our prayer life is hindered, and we stray from the Lord. Away, then, with anxious cares and faithless fears! Let us repent and return to simple faith in God's promise, to cast our burdens and cares upon Him, for He careth for us. We are to be *"careful for nothing"* (Phil 4:6), but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving we are to let our requests, our petitions, our worries, be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

THOUGHT: Trust means letting God bear our burden of care.
PRAYER: Lord, increase my faith in Thee.

"CONTINUE IN THE FAITH"

Perseverance is the badge of true saints. The Christian life begins in the ways of God, and continues in the same for life. It is with a Christian as it was with Napoleon. He said, "Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." So, under God, we say, "Conquest has made us what we are, and conquest must sustain us." For the Christian there must be no giving up. Our motto is, *"I press toward the mark"* (Phil 3:14). He only is the true conqueror who continues till the final trumpet of victory is blown and he receives the victor's crown. Until then, *"Continue in the faith"* (Col 1:23) is our motto.

Perseverance is what every true Christian must strive for. The world does not object to your confessing Christ only for a time, as many fairweather Christians do. The flesh has many allurements to ensnare and draw away the carnal professors. Enticements are hurled at Christians along the way: "It is hard to be a pilgrim, a believing Christian, a true follower of the Lamb. Come aside to the pavilions of ease and pleasure. Life is here and now!" Satan's wiles know no limit or boundaries.

But our Lord is ever victorious. He, not Satan, has the keys of hell and of death. He, not Satan, has the power to cast body and soul into hell. Serve Him, follow Him and continue in the faith. See a great cloud of witnesses, successfully completing their course. They continued steadfast in the faith. We must too! The race will soon be over; the victory is assured. Run on!

THOUGHT: Look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.
PRAYER: Lord, help me to endure to the end.

"WHAT IS THY SERVANT?"

If Mephibosheth was thus humbled by David's kindness, what shall we be in the presence of our gracious Lord? The more grace we have, the less highly we shall think of ourselves, for grace only reveals our impurity. Godly men with their keen sense of unworthiness scarcely know to what they might compare themselves. The saintly Rutherford said, "I am a dry and withered branch, a piece of dead carcass, dry bones ..." – pretty useless and worthless. Then what is another of God's servants to be compared to?

A dog? Perhaps of little worth, yet by a little kindness it is soon won to love its master, and is faithful even unto death. Are we worth more than a dog? *"Dead dog"* (2 Sam 9:8) is a term of utter contempt, and may be appropriate to express self-abhorrence by a contrite broken-hearted sinner who, having weighed himself in God's balance in the Sanctuary, is only too acutely conscious of the vileness of his nature. At best we are but creatures of dust.

And yet, wonder of wonders, the Lord Jesus should set His great heart of love upon depraved fallen creatures such as we are. But He did. He came to woo us and to win us unto Himself, that we might show forth the exceeding greatness of His power and magnify the marvels of His grace toward us.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ... According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph 1:3-4). Indeed, God has chosen servants to be sons.

THOUGHT: God worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.
PRAYER: I praise Thee, O God, for the Son of Thy love.

"THE KING'S TABLE"

Who may sit at the king's table but those who have found favour in the king's sight. Mephibosheth was so favoured and was given a permanent place at King David's table. In him the king could see features of his beloved departed Jonathan. There was nothing attractive in Mephibosheth, but he had the king's favour.

We, like Mephibosheth, have been favoured with a permanent place at the Lord's table. Like him, we may cry unto the King of Glory, *"What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?"* The Lord accords us a continual welcome because He sees in our countenances the remembrance of His dearly-beloved Son, Jesus. We are dear to the Father for the Son's sake. Such is the love which the Father bears to His only begotten, that for His sake He raises us, the fallen sons of earth, to become sons of God, heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ.

Like Mephibosheth, our deformity does not exclude us from the royal privilege of sonship. His lameness is our lameness, but the King's table is also a noble hiding place for lame legs. Our Gospel enables us to glory in our infirmities that the power of Christ our Lord may rest upon us. The King's table is a place for daily communion and sweet fellowship with our beloved Lord Jesus. We have heard His voice, we have responded to His call, we have confessed His name. He will not deny us, but will surely confess us before the Father who is in Heaven. All praise and thanks be unto the Son, our Mediator and Advocate.

THOUGHT: The King's table has room for more, many more.
PRAYER: Lord, lead me to some soul today.

"JUSTIFIED ... GLORIFIED"

"Whom He justified, them He also glorified." Here is profound and precious truth for every child of God. You may be in great suffering, or poverty, or persecution, but God's Word has great encouragement for you. As surely as you are God's child, being justified by faith, so surely shall all your trials come to an end, and you will enter into a state of glory now unknown.

The writer of this Epistle himself had experienced tribulations and trials without number. Was he downcast, ready to give up his Christian service? Listen: he wrote, *"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"* (Rom 8:18). By and by, that weary head shall wear the crown of glory, and that hand of much toil shall wave the palm branch of victory.

There is a great day coming for you who have been justified by His grace. The land of glory awaits your arrival, the New Jerusalem prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. There God will dwell with the redeemed and justified, and they shall be His people, and He shall be their God and *"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away"* (Rev 21:3-4).

This is the *"glory which shall be revealed"* (Rom 8:18), reserved for all who have been justified.

THOUGHT: It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.
PRAYER: Help me to run with patience the race before me.

"THIS I RECALL"

Memory is a two-edged sword. Despairing minds call to remembrance the dark foreboding of the past, and magnify every gloomy event of the present. Such memory, clothed in sackcloth, embitters and depresses the mind. There is however no necessity for this.

Wisdom can readily wield the two-edged sword of memory in a different direction, and transform memory into an angel of comfort. That same faculty of recall which in its left hand brought gloom, may be trained to bear in its right hand a bloom of bright flowers.

Thus it was in Jeremiah's experience. In verse 20, memory had caused him deep humiliation of soul: *"My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me"* (Lam 3:20). But the same memory in verse 21 brought him restoration to life and comfort: *"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope"* (Lam 3:21). Like a two-edged sword, his memory first killed his pride with one edge, and then slew his despair with the other.

To every dark memory there is a silver lining of good hope for the child of God. In the Book of Truth and at the throne of grace, every true believer will find strength and comfort from God sufficient for every difficult situation in life. By all means, let us recall from the volumes of the memorials of God's mercies, and there may the God of all comfort fill our hearts and minds with wonderful memories of His goodness and grace – more than sufficient to lift us from the darkest valley of shadow.

THOUGHT: *"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits"* (Ps 103:2).
PRAYER: Help me to remember my Creator in the days of my youth.

"THOU HATEST WICKEDNESS"

He who loves truth must hate every false way. Our Lord Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, and He hates every false way. How He hated the lying deception of the tempter in the wilderness. Three times the devil, that old serpent, assailed the Son of God, and three times our Lord repelled him with the Word, even the truth of God.

Against the religious establishment, our Lord had stern words of rebuke: *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer"* (Matt 23:14). He hated wickedness, so much so that He yielded His life as the supreme weapon, the only effective weapon, to destroy the source of all wickedness: *"... he also himself likewise took part of the same* (flesh and blood); *that through death he might destroy ... the devil"* (Heb 2:14), the father of lies and wickedness.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, risen to be the living Head of the Church and Giver of Life. This is the Gospel of Christ, the Good News of God, which strikes the death blow on wickedness and sin of every kind and in every form. So in hearts where Jesus reigns, wickedness and sin are subdued, overcame by the blood of the Lamb that was slain. So hot is His hatred of sin, so complete will be the destruction of every wickedness in hearts where Jesus reigns.

Question: Does Jesus reign in your heart? If so, you too will hate every wickedness.

THOUGHT: Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.
PRAYER: Precious blood of Jesus, cleanse my heart from every wickedness.

JERICHO REBUILT

Jericho fell at the blast of the trumpets of God's army. Its mighty city walls came crumbling down by the supernatural power of God. What God had destroyed, let no man rebuild. So Joshua pronounced the sentence: *"Cursed be the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho ..."* (Josh 6:26).

Rome is the spiritual Jericho. In the sixteenth century the "walls of Jericho" fell at the sound of the Gospel trumpet blast. What had been thought to be impregnable and unassailable, collapsed under the mighty Gospel advance led by men like Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Knox. The iron grip of the Roman Church over England and most of Europe was shattered, and freedom of worship under the Reformation was restored. Protestantism flourished in the face of Roman Counter Reformation and the brutal, merciless, inhuman Inquisition.

Cursed be the man that riseth up to rebuild this city spiritual Jericho. That rebuilding proceeds with ever increasing momentum, aided and accelerated by the global movement of Ecumenism, greatly abetted by the Evangelicals of Protestantism. Amazing *"falling away"* (2 Thess 2:3) and *"strong delusion"* (2 Thess 2:11) are helping to build a global super church under Rome. Soon, OIKOUMENE will engulf the world.

What must we do? God's faithful people must awake and take stock. We can do nothing to halt the ecumenical advance, but we can keep out and stay out. We can also tell other believers to do likewise.

THOUGHT: Ecumenism is the broad way of destruction.
PRAYER: Lord, save Thy people from the great deception.

LITTLE FOXES SPOIL THE VINES

Little foxes spoil the vines; little sins do mischief to the heart. They burrow into the soul, contaminate it with ugly things hateful to Christ, so that He will hold no fellowship with us. Besides, the little sins make the Christian miserable. The Lord will not walk with His people unless they drive out every known sin. He says, *"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love"* (John 15:10).

Some Christians seldom enjoy their Saviour's fellowship. How is this? Can a tender child be separated from his father? Are you a child of God, and be satisfied without seeing your Heavenly Father's face? And are we not also the Bride of Christ? And can we not long for His company? Surely the Spouse mourns when Christ has left her, when He hides His face because of our sins. Oh the little foxes which spoil the vines, the little sins which spoil our communion with the Lord! What must we do to have His fellowship restored?

We need help! Our Lord has promised the Holy Spirit Comforter, the Spirit of Truth who leads us into all truth, and shows us our sins. And what are those sins which mar our fellowship with the Lord? Are they not the works of the flesh which contaminate the heart? Listen! God's Word says, *"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh"* which are listed in Galatians 5:21: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.

THOUGHT: Grieve not the Holy Spirit by these *"little foxes."*
PRAYER: Lord, save me from *"little foxes."*

"WE SHOULD NOT SERVE SIN"

Christian, what hast thou to do with sin? Has it not cost enough already? Burnt child, will you play with the fire? What? You who have been rescued from the lion's paws, will you venture again into his den? Or, have you not had enough of the old serpent, the enemy of souls?

Oh, be not so mad, so foolish! Sin never gives what it promises but deceives with lies and sweet words. Be not a second time ensnared by the old fowler but keep away and stay free from his clutches. Remember your former bondage and its misery? Stay out, and stay clear!

It is contrary to the designs of eternal love which are for your purity and holiness. Therefore go not against God's purposes in your life. Another thought should restrain you from sin: you can never sin cheaply; there is a heavy price to pay. Transgression destroys peace of mind, mars your fellowship with the Lord, hinders your prayer life and cripples your service for God. Why, then, do you return to serve sin?

Finally, consider: each time you *"serve sin"* (Rom 6:6), you have crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame. This ought not to be said of a true child of God. Oh if you have fallen into some secret sin, heed the Saviour's plea: *"Look unto me, and be ye saved"* (Isa 45:22). Turn to Him anew. With weeping and a broken contrite spirit, return to the Lover of your soul. He is of tender compassion and mercy to pardon and forgive. Only return, to sin no more!

THOUGHT: No man can serve two masters.
PRAYER: Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts.

THE BROOK KIDRON

David passed over the brook Kidron when fleeing from his traitor son. David, the man after God's own heart, was not exempt from trouble. His life was full of it. He was both the Lord's anointed as well as the Lord's afflicted. As trouble came his way, should it not come our way as well? Sorrows and ashes are no respecter of persons, wherefore we should not complain as though some strange thing had happened to us.

The King of kings also passed over the brook, through which the filth of Jerusalem flowed. In His company was the traitor Judas. Of him our Lord had said, *"He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me"* (Matt 26:23). In sorrow and humiliation, see the King of Love, the Son of God, tread the path of suffering and shame to be delivered into the hands of violent sinful men.

In all our afflictions, He was afflicted. David, the suffering king, yet returned in triumph. His affliction had its consolation. David's Lord also returned in triumph over death and the grave. He endured the cross and despised the shame, for our sakes. Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.

Today, we who follow the Lord may be passing over our Kidron of humiliation. Keep close to Him and never be discouraged. The day will reveal it: there is yet a happy return, because we are in the company of the King of kings. In Him is a bright and everlasting hope.

THOUGHT: Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.
PRAYER: Teach me the lesson of patient suffering.

"WHO HEALETH ALL THY DISEASES"

The wages of sin is death; the disease of sin is dying. Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are all in the process of dying. This is the universal sickness for which man has no remedy. Only Jesus! Only He, the Great Physician, can heal us of this universal sickness, and He does heal all who come to Him.

Let us consider our Great Physician. When we come to Him, He attends to us without delay and willingly. He cures instantly and fully. He gives "life for a look" and He strikes at the very root of the malady, so His cures are sure and certain. He never fails and the cure is permanent: there is no relapse with His healing. Our doctors treat, and "patch up for a season." Before long the disease is back, and finally becomes untreatable. But our Great Physician makes us anew.

Medical science has many branches and specialities. Specialists and professors of medicine know more and more about less and less! Our Lord Jesus knows everything about everyone! He knows us through and through. *"Is any thing too hard for the LORD?"* (Gen 18:14). He is able to diagnose and treat every sort of disease and every complication no matter how serious or unusual. He is the Divine Physician. He Himself is the remedy and cure for every condition. "His blood cleanseth us from all sin."

Come to Jesus! Come one, come all; come big, come small! Trust Him, and sin dies; love Him, and grace lives; follow Him, and He increases strength day by day, until the perfect day.

THOUGHT: In Christ we have endless health.
PRAYER: Keep me spiritually healthy and strong, dear Lord.

THE FIRST DAY

"In the beginning God created ..." (Gen 1:1). God's Word opens with a simple yet immense statement: a declaration of God's omnipotence and omniscience. No theories or speculations; no myriad ages and aeons of time; no "big bang" or endless evolutionary cycles; no guesswork.

Modern man magnifies himself "at God's expense" and "cuts God down to size." Of these the Lord says simply, *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"* (Ps 14:1), *"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"* (Rom 1:22). Wisdom is first and foremost to know God: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"* (Prov 1:7), and *"the beginning of wisdom"* (Prov 9:10).

Turn our minds back to that *"first day"* (Gen 1:5) when the Lord Creator began His work of creation. Imagine the earth at the end of the first day, just twenty-four hours from *"the beginning"* (Gen 1:1). Not a soul, not a bird or beast, not a fish or fowl, not a sun or a star, not a tree or plant, or anything! Only God. Modern man in his wisdom believes that he came from an amoeba. Where did the amoeba come from? Modern man has forsaken the Source of Wisdom.

In the humility of wisdom, we attune our ears to eternal truth: *"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest?..."* (Job 38:4-5). Who can declare it but He who did it! Only the Creator, the great "First Cause" can tell us anything about "beginnings" and the *"first day"* (Gen 1:5). Wisdom demands that we acknowledge Him and bow to His Word.

His Word is Truth!

THOUGHT: Where was I when God laid the foundations of the earth?
PRAYER: *"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law"* (Ps 119:18).

"THE LORD SHALL COMFORT ZION"

Zion and Israel are a nation without equal in all history. No people have suffered her captivities and exile; no people have been the target of repeated mass genocide; no people have been revived after two thousand years of global dispersal. Zion is special: the object of God's love, the channel of God's blessing to all nations, and the prime target of Satan's venom.

Two thousand years of unparalleled suffering was the reward for killing their Messiah, the Prince of Life. In A.D. 70, the Promised Land was overrun by the Roman armies. Under Titus, Jerusalem was razed to the ground, a million Jews were killed and the rest dispersed to the four corners of the earth. The "wandering Jews" became the object of a special kind of hatred – "anti-Semitism." They are a despised race.

Yet, after 2000 years without a national identity or a homeland, modern Israel was reborn on 14 May 1948. Such a return to the Land and a revival of nationhood is without precedence and beyond human comprehension. Historian Connor O'Brien rightly called Israel a modern miracle, and no less.

Thousands of years before modern Israel, God's Word predicted, again and again, that God who called the first Jew, Abraham, would recall His people back to the Land: *"For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD ..."* (Isa 51:3). A vast and dramatic transformation of Israel has taken place since 1948. But the real transformation is yet future, at the return of the Lord. Then *"all Israel shall be saved"* (Rom 11:26).

THOUGHT: Israel's history proves God's Word.
PRAYER: Lord, may I rest in the security of Thy Word.

FLESH AGAINST SPIRIT

In every believer's heart there is a constant struggle between the two natures, old and new. The old nature is very active and uses its deadly weapons against newborn grace, while the new nature puts up a resistance and defence against the enemy. God's grace calls on prayer, faith, hope and love, to cast out the evil. Grace takes unto it *"the whole armour of God"* (Eph 6:11) and wrestles.

These two opposing natures will never cease to struggle so long as we are in this world. The battle of Christian with Apollyon lasted three hours. The battle of Christian within himself lasted all the way from the Wicket Gate to the river Jordan. The enemy – "flesh" – is so securely entrenched within that he can never be driven out while we are in this body. What, then, must we do?

Thank God for our Helper, even the Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. He is ever with us, and He never forsakes us. In Him *"we are more than conquerors"* (Rom 8:37) in the ongoing conflict. The battle may be sore and hard-fought, but *"if God be for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom 8:31). We must keep on fighting against evil, without compromise, without let-up, for we are more than conquerors through Christ our Lord.

Therefore, fight bravely on. Even if all the world, and Satan, and the old nature within, were to join forces, we must never be discouraged or dismayed. Keep looking unto Jesus, keep walking in the Spirit, and keep on fighting the *"good fight of faith"* (1 Tim 6:12). Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him and by Him and through Him, victory in the Spirit is assured.

THOUGHT: Trust and obey, for there is no other way.
PRAYER: Lord, I surrender all to Thee.

"GOOD MASTER"

Ponder this title and salutation. He is indeed a Good Master, my Good Master, and no better master can anyone ever have. I delight to be His servant, to run His errands, and to sit at His feet. I am both His servant and disciple, and count this my highest honour. If He should ask me why I call Him *"good"* (Matt 19:16). I should have a ready answer. I know that there is none good but one, that is God. I know also that Jesus is God. Did He not say in John 14:9 and 10:30, *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father ... I and my Father are one"*? In all my experience, I have found my Lord Jesus good, only good, and nothing but good.

He was good to me when I was dead in sin, for He raised and quickened me. In all my struggles and sorrows, my needs and problems, He has been good to me. Never could there be a better Master in all the world – this world and the world to come. His service is freedom, His rule is love. He teaches me and encourages me in my ignorance and weakness; He is ever gentle and gracious, patient and persevering with me.

All who have ever served my Master are agreed on this, that as a Master there is no equal. He presses on me no heavy burden or hard demand. He bids me, *"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"* (Matt 11:29-30). And He says, *"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne"* (Rev 3:21).

THOUGHT: My Good Master is coming soon, with a reward.
PRAYER: Lord, keep me faithful till the end.

"UNLEARNED AND IGNORANT"

The Temple authorities, the doctors of the law, did not have a high opinion of the disciples of Jesus, whom they regarded as *"unlearned and ignorant men"* (Acts 4:13). But they were impressed by their speech, their wisdom and courage, and they marvelled, and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

The followers and disciples of Jesus were different simply because *"they had been with Jesus"* (Acts 4:13).

The potters in 1 Chronicles 4:23 were not the highest grade of workers, but *"they dwelt with the king."* That elevated and dignified them from lowly artisans to royal workers because they were useful to the king, and they were in the king's service.

The world places great stress on "status" – meaning "position" which comes from education, appointment, possessions, skills, accomplishment and achievement, connections. The world holds the Lord Jesus and His followers with little honour or regard. What can Jesus and Christians do for society? In the eyes of the establishment, true believers of Jesus Christ are still viewed like John and Peter – *"unlearned and ignorant men"*– inconsequential and irrelevant.

But let it be known, those who truly serve the King of kings, that *"they had been with Jesus,"* or like the potters, *"that they dwelt with the king."* Whatever we do, whoever we are, let us as true servants of the Lord, bear the Master's imprint *"full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). The one thing that matters: not what men of the world think, but how true we are to the Lord.

THOUGHT: More like the Master I would ever be.
PRAYER: Make me a good witness for Thee, O Lord!

Swallow your pride occasionally.
It is non-fattening.

"HE HUMBLED HIMSELF"

Our Lord Jesus is the great Teacher of humility. We need to daily learn of Him. See the Master taking a towel and washing the disciples' feet. Of the purpose of His coming, He said, *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). Our Lord was the Servant of all. He descended from the highest of heaven's glory to the lowest of human poverty, to enter history as a baby in a manger, by way of a virgin's womb. His first habitation was among animals because there was no room for the King of glory in the inn.

Thus the Lord Creator was received into His own Creation, without even the normal comforts of home. Ponder His words: *"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head"* (Matt 8:20). In His humility, He forsook heaven's glory for lowly earth for our sakes. *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"* (2 Cor 8:9).

Who is the true disciple of Jesus but he who humbles himself before the cross? As we think of how Jesus stooped for us, we bow ourselves low at His feet. May the Lord lead us in humble soul-searching to Calvary. There, let us shed all sense of self and pride, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ, put on His self-abasement, His servanthood, His self-sacrifice. Beneath His cross may the spirit of humility flood our souls and equip us to be better servants for Him.

THOUGHT: To be chief, one has to be a servant.
PRAYER: Lord, I will take up my cross and follow Thee.

"RECEIVED UP INTO GLORY"

In the days of His flesh, our Lord had *"no form nor comeliness"* (Isa 53:2) and there was no beauty about Him that would make men desire Him. He was *"despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"* (Isa 53:3). He whose brightness is as the morning, wore the sackcloth of sorrow and shame, to tread the way of the cross. There He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9-11).

The foregoing account speaks of our Lord's exaltation by the Father, the splendour and majesty of which we have no knowledge except if we turn to John's description in Revelation 1:12-18, a picture of awesome holiness and divine excellence which mere words do not fully describe. Nevertheless we know, our Lord even now sits enthroned at the Father's right hand, wearing all the glory and pomp of Heaven, with ten thousand times ten thousand angels ministering to Him.

Today, our Lord's exceeding greatness cannot be comprehended even feebly, not by any stretch of man's imagination. Only when He returns in power in the clouds with all the holy angels, then shall His glory be revealed, and all creation shall resound with His praise.

"Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever" (Ps 45:6).

THOUGHT: *"This same Jesus ... shall so come in like manner ..."* (Acts 1:11).
PRAYER: Lord, teach me to worship only Thee.

"REND YOUR HEART"

Garment-rendering and other outward signs of religious emotions, are easily manifested and are frequently hypocritical; but to feel true repentance is far more difficult, and consequently far less common. Men will attend to the most multiplied and minute ceremonial regulations — for such things are pleasing to the flesh — but true religion is too humbling, too heart-searching, too thorough for the tastes of the carnal men. They prefer something more ostentatious, flimsy, and worldly. Outward observances are temporarily comfortable; eye and ear are pleased; self-conceit is fed, and self- righteousness is puffed up: but they are ultimately delusive, for in the article of death, and at the day of judgment, the soul needs something more substantial than ceremonies and rituals to lean upon. Apart from vital godliness, all religion is utterly vain; offered without a sincere heart, every form of worship is a solemn sham and an impudent mockery of the majesty of heaven.

Heart-rending is divinely wrought and solemnly felt. It is a secret grief which is personally experienced, not in mere form, but as a deep, soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of and believed in, but keenly and sensitively felt in every living child of the living God. It is powerfully humiliating, and completely sin-purging; but then it is sweetly preparative for those gracious consolations which proud unhumbled spirits are unable to receive; and it is distinctly discriminating, for it belongs to the elect of God, and to them alone.

The text commands us to rend our hearts, but they are naturally hard as marble. How, then, can this be done? We must take them to Calvary: a dying Saviour's voice rent the rocks once, and it is as powerful now. O blessed Spirit, let us hear the death-cries of Jesus, and our hearts shall be rent even as men rend their vestures in the day of lamentation.

THOUGHT: My sins sent my Saviour to the cross.
PRAYER: Lord, make me to see the filth of the sins in my life.

AM I A HYPOCRITE?

The rush is spongy and hollow, and even so is a hypocrite; there is no substance or stability in him. It is shaken to and fro in every wind just as formalists yield to every influence; for this reason the rush is not broken by the tempest, neither are hypocrites troubled with persecution.

I would not willingly be a deceiver or be deceived; perhaps the text for this day may help me to try myself whether I be a hypocrite or no.

The rush by nature lives in water, and owes its very existence to the mire and moisture wherein it has taken root. Let the mire become dry, and the rush withers very quickly. Its greenness is absolutely dependent upon circumstances: a present abundance of water makes it flourish, and a drought destroys it at once. Is this my case? Do I only serve God when I am in good company, or when religion is profitable and respectable? Do I love the Lord only when temporal comforts are received from His hands? If so I am a base hypocrite, and like the withering rush, I shall perish when death deprives me of outward joys. But can I honestly assert that when bodily comforts are few, and my surroundings are not conducive for me to follow God, I will still hold fast my integrity and faith in God? If yes, then I have hope that there is genuine vital godliness in me.

The rush cannot grow without mire, but plants planted by the Lord can and do flourish even in the year of drought. A godly man often grows best when his worldly circumstances decay. He who follows Christ for His bag is a Judas; they who follow for loaves and fishes are children of the devil. But they who follow and obey Him out of love to Himself are His own beloved ones.

THOUGHT: Am I a Christian hypocrite?
PRAYER: Lord, let me find my life in Thee, and not in the mire of this world's favour or gain.

"THE THINGS WHICH ARE NOT SEEN"

In our Christian pilgrimage it is well, for the most part, to be looking forward. Forward lies the crown, and onward is the goal. Whether it be for hope, for joy, for consolation, or for the inspiring of our love, the future must, after all, be the grand object of the eye of faith.

Looking into the future we see sin cast out, the body of sin and death destroyed, the soul made perfect, and fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Looking further yet, the believer's enlightened eye can see death's river passed, the gloomy stream forded, and the hills of light attained on which standeth the celestial city; he seeth himself enter within the pearly gates, hailed as more than conqueror, crowned by the hand of Christ, embraced in the arms of Jesus, glorified with Him, and made to sit together with Him on His throne, even as He has overcome and has sat down with the Father on His throne.

The thought of this future may well relieve the darkness of the past and the gloom of the present. The joys of heaven will surely compensate for the sorrows of earth. Hush, hush, my doubts! Death is but a narrow stream, and thou shalt soon have forded it. Time, how short. Eternity, how long! Death, how brief. Immortality, how endless! Even now I eat of Eshcol's clusters, and sip of the well which is within the gate. The road is so, so short! I shall soon be there.

"When the world my heart is rending
With its heaviest storm of care,
My glad thoughts to heaven ascending,
Find a refuge from despair.
Faith's bright vision shall sustain me
Till life's pilgrimage is past;
Fears may vex and troubles pain me,
I shall reach my home at last."

THOUGHT: This world is not my home.
PRAYER: Lord, lift my eyes to see my eternal Home.

TWO GLOBAL JUDGMENTS

In His eternal plan, God has purposed two judgments for the earth which He made. The first is past, the second is about to descend. Both judgments are global, both are designed by God. In each the destruction is total, except for those in God's "Ark of Salvation." In each judgment, only a few are saved. In the first, only Noah's family of eight survived. In the second and final, the question is posed: how many?

We take a hint from our Lord's words in Luke 18:8: *"... Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"* For answer we read Matthew 24:37-39: *"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking ... until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."*

There will be a calamitous destruction and loss of life at the last judgment. The message for the twenty-first century is: Repent! The Kingdom of God is at hand! Repent and believe the Gospel of Salvation in Jesus Christ before the dreaded day of the Lord. Repent, believe, before it is too late. When God shut the door of the ark, the day of grace was over. Soon our God will bring the Gospel Age to a close and once again the door of grace will shut. Before then, let all believers "Go! Tell!" and let all unbelievers "Come to the Lord! He will save you!" Behold now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. Now means now!

THOUGHT: The Lord will come as a thief in the night.
PRAYER: Lord, awaken Thy people today!

"GOD SO LOVED"

The mark of a Christian is his confidence in the love of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the yielding of his affections to Christ in return. By faith and the leading of the Holy Spirit he acknowledges, "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me." Such constraining love enables him to say, *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19).

In those grand old ages, the heroic period of the infant Church, this double mark of discipleship was clearly stamped on all believers in Jesus. They were men who knew the love of Christ and loved Him in return with an all-consuming passion which accompanied them to prison and to death. Love for their crucified risen Saviour fired them with such soul-hot zeal that it showed in all their actions, in their common speech, and even in the longing in their eyes.

The twenty-first century Church needs to return to the old faith of the Sixteenth Century Reformation. In the face of Roman persecution of "fire, dungeon, and sword," men and women loved the Lord at the cost of life and limb. Love for the Lord was the flame in the heart which burned and shone through the outer man – a testimony which defied death. If Christians today truly know the love of God, and the sacrifice of Calvary, they would not consent to the counterfeit gospel and *"doctrines of devils"* (1 Tim 4:1) now flooding the Church.

"Christ alone!" We love Him because He gave Himself for us. Not Mary or any saint, but Christ. God so loved us, we must love Him in return. Be true to Him!

THOUGHT: If I say I love Him, am I willing to suffer for Him?
PRAYER: Keep me faithful to Thee, O Lord.

"BEHOLD, I AM VILE"

Job's confession spells hope for poor lost sinners. Perhaps it is for someone reading this today. Perhaps you hesitate to come to the Lord because you are vile, too sinful for God to love? But this feeling of vileness and unworthiness is just what qualifies a person for God's salvation. Job, Isaiah and Paul were all in that same lost estate and shared a common confession. It was for the sake of the vile and the filthy that our Lord came into the world. *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost ... They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick"* (Luke 19:10, Matt 9:12).

God's love is for the vile sinner. *"For God so loved the world ..."* – the world of vile sinners – *"that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). The *"whosoever"* takes in all – every vile and hateful sinner. Such is God's love. He spared not His own Son but gave Him up for us all. Thank God for His matchless love.

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa 1:18). Our loving God's invitation is to all. Come now! Make no delay:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me;
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

God bless you who come to Him.

THOUGHT: Only sinners need a Saviour.
PRAYER: I thank Thee for salvation so rich and free.

"SO AM I"

The question is: "Are you an Israelite?" It is very personal and pertinent. The Apostle Paul had no hesitation in making the claim, *"So am I"* (2 Cor 11:22). There are many persons who have no right to the title "Christian" who lightly assume and claim it as their own. This is a day of universal deception and counterfeit. The Church of Jesus Christ is peopled by false professors, "Christians and Christians," born-again types. Men and women who are strangers to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, idol worshippers and self-styled Christians who have never renounced their other religious persuasions, now swell the ranks of Christendom making it the world's largest religious grouping. "Are you a Christian like us?" "If you are, so am I!"

The Ecumenical train takes all and sundry on board, on the fast track to Rome. A billion and a half (1,500 million), and gathering fellow travellers by the billion, the whole world – OIKOUMENE – speeds on. *"So am I"*! Who wants to be left out? Read Revelation 13 and 17. See the end time One World Movement powered by Satan taking shape before our eyes. By 2000 A.D. the pieces were in place for the world's first ever One World Church Government. Make-believe? Fact is stranger than fiction.

Our Lord says of the end-time deception: *"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"* (Matt 24:24). Who are the deceivers, and where are they? Pray for spiritual discernment. Beware the universal *"So am I."*

THOUGHT: The day will reveal who the true believers are.
PRAYER: Open my eyes, Lord, to see the true from the false.

"LOVE THE LORD, HATE EVIL"

There is every good reason for God's people to hate evil and love good. Think of the enormous harm and mischief that evil has brought upon us and the world at large. Sin and evil enslave the masses, bind men and women, and send them on their way to everlasting destruction in hell. Beware of evil in the heart: it works as a canker making the heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?

Oh ponder and think, what a creature you were before God's saving grace dawned upon you. Like others still in darkness, you were an heir of wrath, going with the multitude along the world's broadway, doing all those things which come naturally. Such were all of us in our natural condition, servants of sin and obeying the dictates of sin and the flesh.

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness ... even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Rom 6:17-19).

As children of God, born again into His righteous Kingdom, therefore, hate those things which once enslaved you, from which bondage you have been set free. See evil for what it is: Satan's deadly poison pills, sugar-coated but lethal toxins within. These are the things which entice and ensnare. We who are emancipated, liberated, enlightened, *"hate evil"* (Ps 97:10)! Only love good, and the One from whom all goodness flow.

THOUGHT: Evil comes in many pretty shapes and sizes.
PRAYER: Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil.

"BE ZEALOUS"

"Be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev 3:19). Hear the Lord's entreaty to the end-time Church of Laodicea, and to us who live in the end-time. The call is urgent and earnest. It is from the Head of the Church, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, our soon coming King. The end-time Church is lukewarm, worldly, backslidden. It is *"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"* (Rev 3:17). It needs urgent "radical surgery"!

To the end-time Church is committed the "unfinished commission," to speed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to those who have not heard. Outside are "untold millions yet untold," still without the Gospel, without light and without life. The day of Gospel opportunity is NOW! Do not delay, do not put it off. Do not say, "Wait till I retire," or "wait till I have raised my family," or "wait till I have finished my studies."

Heed the Lord's call: *"Be zealous therefore, and repent"*! Think not of *"all the world"* (Mark 16:15) in far removed and remote places. Think of your immediate situation: home, neighbour, best friend, relative. Most conversions are "won by one." Personal witness works! Tell it as it is: how the Lord saved you. Be zealous! Pray and prepare yourself. As you do, the Holy Spirit works with you, in you, and through you. He enables you, He touches hearts, reaches to the unreached.

Be zealous means "be grateful." Think of the Gospel debt you owe. The Lord has done so much for you. What have you done for Him? Are you grateful? He says, "Go for me! Be zealous!" Will you?

THOUGHT: Repentance starts with me.
PRAYER: Lord, light a flame of love in my heart.

"THE WAR WAS OF GOD"

If the war be of God, victory is assured. The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh, could barely muster forty-five thousand fighting men. Yet in the battle with the Hagarites, they slew *"of men an hundred thousand"* (1 Chron 5:21) for they cried to God and *"he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him"* (1 Chron 5:20).

The Lord saveth not by many or by few; there is no restraint to the Lord. If the battle is the Lord's, it is ours to go forth in Jehovah's name, even though our numbers are few, for the Lord of Hosts is our Captain. We must use all the armour He has put at our disposal but our confidence is in the Lord alone. He is our rock, our fortress, our deliverer, in whom we trust. We will not fear what men shall do unto us.

Elijah stood alone. One man against eight hundred and fifty idol-worshipping prophets. On Mt Carmel, a mighty confrontation took place. God's servant challenged the children of Israel, *"If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word"* (1 Kings 18:21). That day, the Lord answered by fire. The people were converted. The idol-worshipping prophets were executed by Elijah. God granted a great victory.

Today, the believing Church faces enormous idol-worshipping forces in Christendom. So called "Evangelicals," having sold out to idolatry, are now reconciled to Rome and the "all faiths have salvation" gospel. We, the Bible-believing Church and Bible-believing Christians, are up against the "eight hundred and fifty idol-worshipping prophets." The battle lines are drawn. The war is of God.

THOUGHT: The battle is the Lord's.
PRAYER: Lord, open Thy people's eyes.

"MY WORD SHALL COME TO PASS"

God had promised Moses that He would feed the host in the wilderness for one whole month with meat which the people craved for. Moses in a moment of unbelief expressed his doubts. He looked to the creature instead of to the Creator. Our God is the God of the impossible. He who makes the promise fulfils it by His own unaided omnipotence. If He speaks, it is as good as done – by Himself. He does not need the help of any man.

We may think Moses faithless. But would we have done better? How commonly we fall into the same unbelief. Has He not assured us that He will surely supply our *"daily bread"*? In our moment of distress and want, we fall into faithless fear and fretful anxiety, forgetting His words: *"And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind .. your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock ..."* (Luke 12: 29-32).

Have faith, therefore, O child of the Father. And what is faith? Simply, believing and trusting God and His promises. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Heb 11:1). We must not look at the visible means for the fulfilment of the promise, but look to the God of invisible resources who is ever true to His Word.

We may trust Him fully all for us to do.
They who trust Him wholly find Him wholly true.
Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest
Finding, as He promised, perfect peace and rest.

THOUGHT: Trusting Jesus – that is all.
PRAYER: Teach me the lesson of complete trust.

"REJOICE WITH JOY UNSPEAKABLE"

The Christian experience gives cause for much rejoicing because of God's marvellous blessings to us in Christ Jesus our Lord. The Apostle Peter's epistle calls to mind how God the Father according to His foreknowledge chose us, through sanctification of the Spirit (separating us from the world unto His heavenly kingdom), unto obedience and grateful acceptance of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ the Son.

Seeing the amazing "combined rescue operation" of our salvation involving God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we cannot but constantly marvel and rejoice, and tell ourselves, "How wonderful is God's love toward us!" And our Lord Jesus, the One who came and sought us, and bought us for His own, and brought us into His fold; the Lord *"whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"* (1 Pet 1:8).

We join with the Psalmist in recalling God's salvation grace, freeing us from Satan's captivity. *"Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them. The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad"* (Ps 126:2-3). Trials may come our way but our Lord is able to deliver us out of every sore trial. No grief can rob us of the "laughter and singing" of those who daily abide in His love, *"who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (1 Pet 1:5).

THOUGHT: When the Lord appears, my joy will be complete.
PRAYER: Take the world but give me Jesus.

SOLA SCRIPTURA!

The Reformation of the sixteenth century was fought and won on the foundation of God's Word. For a thousand years, Europe languished in dark ignorance – the Word of God being denied to the masses by the church – until God's Spirit moved men of courage to search the Scriptures for themselves. And, not only to search, but to spread the Good News that Scripture, not the priest or the church, had the truth and the way of salvation.

Once men had access to God's Word, the spell cast by Rome over the masses was lifted, and Gospel-preaching churches sprang up all over Europe and England. In the Counter Reformation and Rome's efforts to snuff out the flames of revival and stamp out the Reformation, countless millions suffered torture, persecution and death. Nevertheless, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, and the life of the Church thrived on, nourished by the Holy Word of God.

Nothing but the Word of God sustains a Christian in his faith and walk with God. Our Lord's words apply: *"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."* The twenty-first century Church is coming in for a new taste of Counter Reformation, aided and abetted by Protestants – Evangelicals, Charismatics, Liberals, "Christians." Bible-believing Christians ("fundamentalists") have only one security: the Holy Scripture. Our motto is SOLA SCRIPTURA - ONLY THE SCRIPTURE! Not church tradition or any dogma, or anything else.

THOUGHT: Add to Holy Scripture and a different kind of Christianity emerges.
PRAYER: Lord, save me from the counterfeit gospel.

"LIVE UNTO THE LORD"

Did it occur to you why believers at conversion are not soon translated to Heaven, but continue on earth until death calls? What is God's purpose in keeping His people out of Paradise to live on this dreary Planet? The simple answer is: we are here to *"live unto the Lord"* (Rom 14:8).

Our Lord ascended to Heaven, leaving the great Gospel work to the disciples, and succeeding generations of disciples, to continue and extend it unto the uttermost part of the earth. This is the mystery of divine redemption: saved sinners are to go and save other sinners. In God's sovereign will and unsearchable wisdom, He entrusted the entire Gospel work to the believers of each succeeding generation.

It is perfectly reasonable that we who have received so great a salvation should repay our Gospel debt. For this one reason, the redeemed of God should count it an unspeakable privilege to be counted worthy to be called into the King's service, to be *"labourers together with God"* (1 Cor 3:9). God did not commit the Gospel work to angels for the simple reason that Christ did not die to save angels.

To *"live unto the Lord"* is also to show forth the transforming power of the Gospel in our lives, how men and women made new in Christ can be a significant blessing to society, friends and family. We are to live to the glory of the Saviour, as epistles written in hearts to be known and read of all men (2 Cor 3:2). Are we?

THOUGHT: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"* (Phil 1:21).
PRAYER: Lord, help me live so that others may see Jesus in me.

"THEY WHICH TESTIFY OF ME"

Jesus Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the Bible. He is the one constant flowing theme of its sacred pages. From first to last they testify of Him. Why is this so? Simply because He is the Author as well as the Principal Character of the Book.

At the Creation, we see Him as one of the Holy Trinity. In the Garden, we see Him in the promise of the woman's seed. In the Great Flood, we see Him typified in Noah's Ark. Walk with Abraham and look through his eyes down the avenues of history, to see the Messiah's day ahead. Dwell in the tents of Jacob, and we hear him foretelling the coming of Shiloh. In the numerous types of the Law, we find the Redeemer abundantly foreshadowed.

Coming to the New Testament record we find our Lord the one prevailing theme. The substance of the New Testament is Jesus crucified. Its closing pages are adorned with the Redeemer's name. Reading Scripture with Holy Spirit enlightenment, we see Jesus reflected in its pages as in a glass – a blessed preparation for the day when we shall see Him face to face.

All that we need to know of our Saviour and Lord are inscribed within the sacred pages of the Bible. Not by extrabiblical writings, fantastic "live encounters with Christ" or "visions and dreams" or "words of wisdom and knowledge." God's Word has ample warning against counterfeit Christs and saviours.

We hold fast to the Bible – the King James Bible: *"they which testify of me"* (John 5:39).

THOUGHT: For authenticity, read the King James Bible.
PRAYER: Help me to see Jesus in the Bible.

"WE LOVE HIM"

As all light on this planet proceedeth from the sun, so there is no true love toward Jesus but that which flowed from the Lord Jesus Himself. From the overflowing fountain of the infinite love of God, all our love must spring. This is the unalterable and irrefutable truth: that we love Him because He first loved us, and all the love in our hearts first took their origin from His great loving heart. See then our love toward Him as the fair offspring of His divine love to us.

Admiration comes naturally, but true love, "Calvary love," can only be supernaturally kindled in one's heart by God's Holy Spirit. It is simply too amazing to contemplate that enemies of God (such as we once were) should ever have been converted and brought to love Jesus at all! Equally amazing is why God should ever choose vile sinners to be the objects of His love. We have no explanation save in God's own Word that God chose us *"according to the good pleasure of his will"* and *"according to the riches of his grace"* (Eph 1:5,7).

We understand, then, that the love we have toward Christ has been divinely sown in our hearts. If so it must be divinely nourished and watered from above. Let us receive daily that heavenly bread, God's manna, from His inspired Holy Word, and water from the Holy Spirit and prayer. Only then can we love the Lord with pure holy fervent love.

THOUGHT: If we say we love God, we must also love one another.
PRAYER: Lord, give me more love to love Thee more.

"YEA, HATH GOD SAID?"

God's Word is under attack, today as never before. *"Yea, hath God said ..."* (Gen 3:1) was Satan's declaration of war against the Word from the dawn of Creation. The father of lies sows doubt and fosters unbelief.

Satan is a master strategist. He varies his tactics to devilish advantage. In the Dark Ages, he used suppression. God's Word was kept from the people by the church, the instrument of oppression and deception. Stirrings of Reformation sparked a revival of the Word. For daring to read or preach, men and women suffered "dungeon, fire, and sword." But God's Spirit raised men and women of truth and valour who, for love of God's Word, *"loved not their lives unto the death"* (Rev 12:11).

In time, burning of martyrs fell out of fashion. Suppression was replaced by subversion: "The pure Word of God, the King James Bible, must be replaced by doctored versions!" The first, the English Revised Version (ERV 1881), breached the dike of Holy Scripture, and a hundred Modern English Versions poured through the floodgate of Revisionism. Feeding Christians with poisoned versions is more effective for Satan's purpose than feeding them to the flames.

Today, Modern Versions have all but replaced the Good Book, the King James Bible. Through years of subtle propaganda, aided by the smokescreen of "language and readability," Christendom has been led to believe that Modern Versions are more accurate, more readable, more trustworthy, than the King James Bible.

But Modern Versions contain hidden poison from the serpent's tongue: *"Yea, hath God said ..."* (Gen 3:1).

THOUGHT: The 400-year-old KJB is God's best gift.
PRAYER: Open my eyes to see the true from the false.

AMAZING PROPHECY FULFILLED

Peter was charged by our Lord to *"feed my sheep"* (John 21:16). He foresaw and warned of the coming subversion of God's Word by false teachers bringing in *"damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them"* (2 Pet 2:1), and because of them the *"way of truth shall be evil spoken of"* (2 Pet 2:2). Peter was concerned for the sheep being fed with *"damnable heresies."*

The Apostle's prophetic foresight saw the emergence of Modern Versions containing *"damnable heresies"* in the twentieth century, and the King James Bible being *"evil spoken of."* We have examined seven Modern English Versions (Good News Bible, New American Standard Version, New English Bible, New International Version, New King James Version, Revised Standard Version, The Living Bible). Each of the seven (more popular) versions, without exception, contain *"damnable heresies"* attacking the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ (*"denying the Lord that bought them"*) and each version without exception casts doubt on the trustworthiness and faithfulness of the King James Bible (*"way of truth ... evil spoken of"*).

Whereas the KJB's predecessors were translated at the cost of burning at Roman stakes, and at no personal profit, today's Modern Versions are huge "money spinners" and "best sellers," bringing dollar profits by the multimillions to the Bible Societies, copyright holders, publishing houses and translators. The NIV in twenty years sold some 100 million copies, and its publishers Zondervan's profits have soared skywards. Peter the Apostle foresaw it when he wrote: *"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you"* (2 Pet 2:3).

THOUGHT: Effective poison hides behind much wholesome stuff.
PRAYER: Give me spiritual eyesight, Lord.

GOD OR SATAN?

The conflict allows no neutrality: God or Satan? You must take a stand. God's Word is under attack!

God has one plan for man's eternal redemption, only one: that all men believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, the virgin-born Saviour of the world; that through faith in Him and His finished work on Calvary's cross, sinful men may be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13).

The Gospel offer is revealed to us, complete and perfect, through one English Bible, the King James Bible (KJB) or Authorised Version. Only the KJB excludes any corrupting doctrine or rival plan of salvation which detracts from, or dishonours, the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Christ is *"once delivered"* (Jude 3), final and complete; any other "gospel" is false and accursed (Gal 1:6-9).

The King James Bible is the "Crowning Gem" of the sixteenth century Reformation; the Light which shattered a thousand years of Roman darkness; the Bulwark of Protestantism; the Rock of Defence against counterfeit Christianity; the Sword of the Spirit which spells doom to the father of lies. By the KJB the Gospel revived; great church and missionary movements flourished, and God's Kingdom extended far and wide.

Wherefore, Satan hates the KJB! To burn and ban is not convenient. The wily foe has a better, more brilliant, idea: let a hundred English versions bloom, a hundred heresies contend! The angel of light used *"deceitful workers ... transformed as the ministers of righteousness"* (2 Cor 11:13,15) to produce corrupt New English Versions.

RESULT: A hundred corrupt Modern English Versions came forth.
PRAYER: Lord, keep me faithful to Thy Word of truth.

INVASION OF VERSIONS

Satan is the Master of subversion. His secret weapon is counterfeit Bibles. By his evil genius he sent forth a hundred corrupted Modern English Versions displacing the KJB from its time-honoured position as the authoritative Word of God, the Bible of the Reformation, the "Protestant Bible." As the symbol and fortress of Truth which had stood against Rome, *"stedfast, unmoveable"* (1 Cor 15:58) in the face of the Counter Reformation, the KJB had to be overthrown to make way for ecumenical forces in their Romeward advance.

In the closing decade of the twentieth century, ecumenical forces from many directions converge in Rome, the global magnet which powerfully and irresistibly draws every denomination in Protestantism, with "front runners" (Evangelicals, Charismatics, Promise Keepers, World Council liberals and modernists) in the lead, encouraging and urging the major religions to join. The target: Oikoumene, One World.

Where do the Modern English Versions come in? Just where the obedient ecumenical Protestants are massing, the Modern English Versions receive their massive support (several with Rome's approval, being accorded the Papal "imprimatur"). The KJB being "outdated," "obsolete" and "archaic," is now swept aside, clearing the last "road block" on the path to Rome.

The seven most popular Modern English Versions are doctored to give each one a pro-ecumenical and pro-Rome bias. Fact is stranger than fiction; the father of lies is smarter than you suspected. The false "gospel" of Galatians 1:6-9 has gained a brilliant foothold in these Modern English Versions.

THOUGHT: The Bible predictions have come true.
PRAYER: Lord, save Thy people from the ecumenical deception.

THE VIRGIN'S SON (1)

We are in the midst of a great theological upheaval, more disturbing than an earthquake. Modernists are shaking the very foundation of our faith. Daring denial of the Virgin Birth began in our seminaries and universities in the early twentieth century. It spread to our churches and into the Modern English Versions of the Bible. Finally, almost every Christian institution has come to live with it.

Some church leaders belittle the seriousness of the matter and dismiss the controversy as something unnecessary. After all, the Word of God assures us that we are saved by believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, so why is it necessary to bring in the Virgin Birth?

So we see a strange struggle: the enemy attacking a foundational pillar of the Christian faith, and certain custodians of the Church rising to the defence of the enemy! The assault upon the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is really an assault upon the Deity of Christ: deny His Virgin Birth and His Deity collapses. Deny the Virgin Birth and Christ becomes a natural person, like you and me. Where then is His Deity, His Godhead, His Supernatural Person? A human Christ stripped of His Deity cannot save.

Now, when a book which bears the label "Holy Bible" also carries an attack on this vital doctrine of the Virgin Birth, such a "Bible" harbours the serpent's venom, pent up from the Garden encounter and "Proto-evangel" announcement of the Lord against the serpent (Gen 3:15). The serpent's forked tongue has done its damage, injected its poison into the Modern English Versions: Good News Bible, New English Bible, New International Version, Revised Standard Version, etc.

THOUGHT: The wily serpent strikes back at the virgin's Son by infiltrating the Bible.
PRAYER: Lord, help me take a stand for Thee.

THE VIRGIN'S SON (2)

In the Garden, the Lord God passed sentence on the serpent: *"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"* (Gen 3:15). The serpent, smarting under the divine condemnation attacked the vital fundamental doctrine of the Virgin Birth with all venom and subtlety. Throughout Church history from the earliest days, false teachers have arisen to argue against the doctrine of the Supernatural Birth.

In the twentieth century, the serpent's agents infiltrated seminaries, churches, Bible societies, Bible translating and publishing bodies, resulting in the proliferation of corrupt Modern English Versions, all of them attacking the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The *"seed of the woman"* is hated by the serpent with deadly hatred.

These corrupt "Bibles" make out that Jesus was born of a human father, making the KJB account a lie, and making Jesus a mere human. Even worse is the insinuation that His could have been an illegitimate birth. No self-respecting person will take it lying down if his paternity is insulted. Yet respectable churchmen, theologians, Bible scholars, and reputable preachers willingly consent to the abuse heaped upon the paternity of our Lord whom they profess (with lips) to serve. The Modern Church feels no unease of conscience with Modern English Bible Versions which make out that our Lord came of a human father, and of an illegitimate birth.

THOUGHT: The father of lies has loyal allies in the Church.
PRAYER: Lord, give me a faithful spirit to stand up for the truth.

WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

It is well to weigh ourselves frequently on the scale of God. Make it a holy exercise as you read a psalm of David, meditate on each verse, and ask yourself, "Can I say as David? Have I felt as he? Has my heart been moved or broken on account of sin as David when he wrote his penitential psalms? Has my soul experienced the confidence as he did in the hour of difficulty, when he sang of God's mercies in the cave of Adullam?" (Read Psalm 57).

Another spiritual exercise is to read the life of our Lord in the Gospels, and ask yourself, "How far am I conformed to His likeness? Am I imitating Him in His humility, following Him in His lowly and lovely ways?" Then go on to the epistles, and test yourself against the Apostles' experience. Have you ever cried out with Paul, *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* (Rom 7:24).

One day, we shall all be weighed on God's balances, and some will be found wanting, short of God's expectations. The Apostle Paul reminds us, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Cor 5:10). In a spirit of true humility let us plead with the Lord: "Give me a more steadfast faith, a warmer zeal; inflame me with more fervent love; grant me the grace of meekness to be more like my Lord. Grant me to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, and to strive for the good, acceptable, perfect will of God, lest I be found wanting in God's just balances."

THOUGHT: After death, the judgment.
PRAYER: Help me to judge myself now, before that day.

SAVED

Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. What does this mean? It does not mean that they are merely in a hopeful state with a good prospect of obtaining salvation ultimately. It does not mean that a believer will enjoy the blessing only when he lies on his death bed. No! Believers in Christ Jesus are saved now.

The Christian is perfectly saved in God's purpose: God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete. He is saved because the price which was paid for his salvation was settled in full. The Saviour on the cross cried, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). The believer is also perfectly saved in his covenant head: for as he fell in Adam, so he lives in Christ.

See this complete salvation as a holy calling. Those whom the Saviour saved upon the cross are in due time effectually called by the Holy Spirit unto holiness: they leave their sins, and endeavour to be like Christ. Having received from Christ a new nature, they choose the way of holiness, and rejoice in it. *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"* (Eph 2:10).

The saved person does good works and bears fruit by the fullness of the grace of God: the grace which saves also energizes the Christian to glorify the Saviour. Such is God's mighty work of salvation and the believer's privilege – a present salvation; and such is the evidence of it – a holy life.

THOUGHT: We are not saved by works but saved to work.
PRAYER: Fill me, Lord, daily with Thy goodness.

FALSE PROPHETS

Our Lord repeatedly warned of *"false prophets"* who come *"in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves"* (Matt 7:15), and *"false Christs"* (Matt 24:5, 24). Satan uses these agents to harm and destroy the flock. Question: How do these agents of Satan destroy sheep like *"ravening wolves"*? Answer: By perverting the Gospel through false doctrines in translating, preaching and writing. Our immediate concern is in false translation.

Because the KJB was universally acknowledged and received as "The Bible" of the English-speaking people, the authoritative "Word of God" since 1611, Satan had to use men in highest quarters with impressive and prestigious credentials to overthrow the KJB.

Westcott and Hort of Cambridge were two such men, highly qualified and respected churchmen, eminently suited for the task. At heart they were unsaved, unregenerate, enemies of the truth, and haters of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Both of them were Mary-worshippers, admirers and friends of Darwin, and actively involved in occult spirit activities, communicating with *"familiar spirit"* (Deut 18:11).

These two men had been working quietly for twenty years on two most corrupt New Testament manuscripts (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus), in preparation for an assault on the KJB. Sitting on the Committee of Revision (1870), they literally dominated the Committee and laid the groundwork for future Modern English Versions, all of which had a share in attacking and perverting the vital doctrines of the Gospel. (All Modern English Versions draw upon Westcott and Hort's Greek New Testament.)

THOUGHT: Westcott and Hort were corrupt trees. All their fruits are evil.
PRAYER: Lord, help me to see the deception of Modern English Versions.

NIV DECEPTION (1)

The New International Version (NIV) claims to be "the most exact, illuminating rendering of the original languages into English ... so faithfully accurate, that it ushers in a new era of Scriptural clarity for Christians around the world" (Zondervan, 1978).

To be "most exact" and "faithfully accurate," a Bible version must not in any way detract from the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ, or in any way dishonour or attack them.

We now examine a few crucial verses of the NIV which prove beyond argument that the NIV translators had a hidden agenda to attack the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

The NIV attacks the BLOOD of Christ.

Colossians 1:14:
KJV: "In whom we have redemption *through his blood* ..."
NIV: "In whom we have redemption."
Note: The NIV translators have removed *"through his blood."*

Why? Because Satan hates the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7), and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb 9:22).

Furthermore, God's people overcome Satan by the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11).

Throughout Scripture the one vital weapon which alone is able to defeat Satan is the *"blood of the Lamb"* (Rev 12:11). To attack the blood of Christ is proof of the hidden resentment and hatred of Satan, revealed through the NIV translators' pens.

THOUGHT: Satan knows what to attack, and how.
PRAYER: Praise be unto our God for the blood of the Lamb.

NIV DECEPTION (2)

The NIV claims to be "most exact" and "faithfully accurate." To be true to this claim, it must be "most exact" and "faithfully accurate" in all of its parts, in particular in those vital parts which touch on the WORK OF SALVATION of our Lord Jesus Christ. In no part of the Bible text must there be any loophole or rendering which gives place to a false or counterfeit doctrine of salvation. Even one such flaw in translation renders a version unfaithful.

Now we examine the text John 6:47*: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."* Our Lord's words are clearly explicit: only faith in Him (*"on me"*) gives *"everlasting life."* Here is the NIV version of John 6:47: "I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life." (*"on me"* is left out)

We analyse this rendering of the NIV. Does it mean "believing in Jesus Christ"?

Answer: Yes and No! If you understand the text to refer to Jesus, it is Yes. If you wish to make out a case for believing in another saviour or ideology, John 6:47 (NIV) will do just as well.

The NIV rendering of John 6:47 strikes at the very heart of the Gospel message proclaimed by our Lord: *"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6). The NIV panel of 100 translators was an ecumenical group with an ecumenical agenda which demanded an inclusive ecumenical translation to accommodate all religions: John 6:47 is it!

THOUGHT: Our Lord's Matthew 5:18 implies that not *"one jot or one tittle"* of God's Word must be tampered with.
PRAYER: Lord, help me to be faithful to Thy every word.

NIV DECEPTION (3)

The ecumenical agenda of the NIV translators required that somewhere in their version, room be made for the other religions to be seen as equal with Christianity. This demanded the "cutting down to size" of Christ and reducing Him to "man" and not "God" (at least in some parts of the text).

In this the NIV translators succeeded brilliantly. We cite five instances where the King James Bible text has been subtly doctored to make Christ equal to any of the other religions' founders.

a) NIV attacks Christ's eternal pre-existence.
   In Micah 5:2 our Lord's origin *"from everlasting"* is changed to *"from ancient times."*
b) NIV attacks Christ's deity.
   In 1 Timothy 3:16 NIV changes *"God"* to *"He."*
c) NIV attacks Christ's Sonship of God.
   In John 9:35 *"Son of God"* is changed to *"son of man."*
d) NIV attacks Christ's equality with God.
   In Philippians 2:5-6 Christ being *"equal with God"* is changed to *"did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."*
e) In Acts 3:13, *"His Son Jesus"* is changed to *"His servant Jesus."*

These and other similar passages in the NIV provide sufficient ground for other religions to be brought into ecumenical fellowship on an equal footing with Christianity. After all, the Christ of the NIV is only a man like the other great religious leaders.

This is what unbelievers think, but now the Modern English Versions make it "official"!

THOUGHT: With the help of the NIV, all the world and Christendom may see Jesus as a man only.
PRAYER: Lord, save me from "great delusion."

NIV DECEPTION (4)

The hundreds of inaccurate and unfaithful renderings in the NIV conform to one overriding agenda and objective, namely, to humanize our Lord Jesus Christ. The mere fact that all the central and vital doctrines pertaining to His Person and Redeeming Work have been systematically, subtly (and sometimes savagely) attacked, bear testimony to one fact: The entire version is nothing less and nothing more than the work of an evil "Master Mind" behind the hundred-men Committee of Translation.

We have cited a number of doctored NIV verses attacking the Lord Jesus' Person. Now we conclude with three passages which should convince any true follower of Jesus Christ that the NIV is not a "Bible" in the true sense of the Word: "version" - yes; Holy Bible - No!

a) The NIV attacks the Virgin Birth in Luke 2:33.
In this verse the NIV translators gave Jesus a human father, thus reducing Him to a mere man.

b) In John 3:16 *"only begotten Son"* is translated *"one and only Son"* - a gross and grave error, destroying the original Greek *"monogenes"* which describes our Lord's status as the *"eternally begotten* of the Father," not a son of any man.

c) The NIV attacks our Lord's Resurrection by separating Mark 16:9-20 (which speaks of our Lord's post resurrection appearances) from the main text, and adding a note before it: "The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20."

CONCLUSION: The NIV is a most corrupt version, not a Holy Bible.
PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for Thy Word – the KJB.

SATAN HATES THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold ... But with the precious blood of Christ ..." (1 Pet 1:18-19). This is the unalterable truth. God has only one remedy for man's sin, and one lethal weapon to deal the death blow on Satan: the precious blood of the Lamb, *"slain from the foundation of the world"* (Rev 13:8). We, the followers of Christ, can overcome the Devil with the blood of the Lamb (Rev 12:11).

For these reasons the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, is exceedingly precious to all who are the redeemed of God, and exceedingly hateful to Satan, the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10) and enemy of our souls.

Therefore Satan *"transformed into an angel of light"* and his servants also *"transformed as the ministers of righteousness"* (2 Cor 11:14-15), infiltrate the ranks of Bible translators in Bible societies, seminaries, Bible translating bodies (eg Wycliffe Translators), and Bible publishers. From within the ranks of Christendom, the agents of Satan quietly undermine the Bible texts and doctor those parts which speak of the blood of Christ, and remove the vital word or substitute it with some other word. For example, the Good News Bible substitutes *"blood"* with *"death"* (Eph 1:7) and *"precious blood"* with *"costly sacrifice"* (1 Pet 1:19).

The Modern English Versions which attack the precious Word of Christ are Good News Bible, New English Bible, New International Version, New King James Version, and Revised Standard Version.

THOUGHT: Satan surely knows how to attack the Bible.
PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for the precious blood of the Lamb.

MASTERPIECE OF DECEPTION – NKJV

By usurping the title of "King James," the New King James Version (published by Thomas Nelson) is a Masterpiece of Deception and a clever counterfeit of the 1611 King James Bible or Authorised Version.

The only resemblance the NKJV has to the 1611 KJB is in the name. Thereafter, all resemblance ceases *"in Spirit and in truth"* (John 4:23), for truly the NKJV is most corrupt, and most deceptive. The reader is advised to read this author's book "Beyond Versions."

Here is the evidence of the NKJV's utter corruption:

a) The NKJV has total disregard for God's Name.
The word *"LORD"* is thrown out 56 times.
The word *"GOD"* is thrown out 51 times.
The word *"JEHOVAH"* is thrown out altogether.

b) The NKJV has utter disregard for God's Word.
"Heaven" is thrown out 48 times; *"hell"* 22 times; *"blood"* 18 times; *"repent"* 11 times; *"devils," "new testament"* and *"damnation"* are thrown out altogether.

c) The NKJV shows utter disrespect and dishonour for God's Son in numerous places, changing *"Lord"* to "Sir," *"Son"* to "Servant," *"Master"* to "Teacher."

d) The NKJV footnotes encourage the "average reader" to "delete something he or she felt was not properly a part of the text."

Conclusion: The NKJV has wantonly altered and doctored God's Word with little regard for its Author.

THOUGHT: We are dealing with the father of lies.
PRAYER: Lord, save me from deceptive versions.

CORRUPT TREE, EVIL FRUITS

Our Lord's teaching on "Tree and Fruit" is the key to understanding Bible Versions. *"Beware of false prophets which come ... in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits"* (Matt 7:15-16). *"False prophets"* are the unregenerate linguists and scholars, Bible translators, consultants, editors – enemies of the truth who come into the Church, seminaries, Bible societies, translation societies, etc, with one objective: to pervert the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

These men are in fact *"ravening wolves"* because their Modern English Bible Versions harbour false doctrines which are like deadly poison to those who read – the sheep of the fold.

"False prophets" are also likened to *"corrupt trees."* At heart they are unregenerate, a corrupt tree with corrupt roots. And a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. This biological law applies in the spiritual realm. An enemy of truth harbouring inner hatred of the Gospel of salvation, no matter how learned a scholar, cannot produce a sound translation of the Bible.

Corrupt translators who have imbibed the poison of Evolutionism, Rationalism, Liberalism, Higher Criticism, Ecumenism and Romanism, use corrupt texts (Vaticanus and Sinaiticus) and corrupt technique (Dynamic Equivalence) in translation. These form the corrupt tree which produces "Modern English Bible Perversions," that is, "evil fruits" (GNB, NASV, NEB, NIV, NKJV, RSV, TLB). All these versions harbour pernicious, poisonous false doctrines.

THOUGHT: Poisoning the version is more effective than burning the readers.
PRAYER: Lord, give me the wisdom from above.

"A MORE SURE WORD"

God's deliverance of England out of a thousand years of Roman darkness was sealed with the greatest English translation of all time, the King James Bible. Without this *"more sure word,"* the most accurate and faithful English Bible, the Reformation in England could not have withstood the forces of the Counter Reformation. The KJB stands as a bulwark of the Protestant faith, a citadel of the truth of God.

The KJB (1611), with a history of 400 years, stands unique – God's gift to the world, the "Good Fruit" of a "Good Tree." The Good Tree comprised "Good Translators" – godly scholars from London, Oxford and Cambridge, men of unquestioned fidelity to Holy Scripture, whose one commitment was to translate faithfully, without *"any private interpretation."* They used the "Good Text" – Textus Receptus, the most faithfully preserved copies of the inspired, inerrant and infallible Scriptures handed down from the New Testament Church through the centuries to the time of the sixteenth century Reformation. They used the "Good Technique" (Formal and Verbal Equivalence), ensuring a "word for word" accuracy and fidelity.

The result: "Good Fruit" – the KJB which **alone** among the English versions in use, preserves perfectly every vital doctrine of the Gospel of Salvation, ensuring "Good Theology." This "Good Book," the KJB, the best loved Bible, calls God's faithful people to rally around it, and lift up its standard against the flood of corrupt Modern English Versions which collectively are aiding the ecumenical forces.

THOUGHT: With the KJB, God's Word stands sure.
PRAYER: Keep me faithful to Thy Word.

PERVERTING THE DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION

Our God is the soul's Doctor. He has a Prescription for life – the Bible. It comes to us by the hands of translators, the "pharmacists."

A good pharmacist honours the doctor's prescription and dispenses the medicine exactly as prescribed, word for word, letter for letter, exact to the minutest detail. This faithful "word for word" method of Bible translation is called "Verbal Equivalence."

The godly translators of the KJB used the faithful Verbal Equivalence method, word for word, as originally given by God. The manuscripts they used were faithful copies of the Original, the Received Text. The result of their translation: a good Prescription and good Medicine, the KJB. Sound, accurate, faithful, true to the Author.

We have a deadly enemy. His one ambition is to pervert the Word of God, to change the Prescription. He used unregenerate men, enemies of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to change the Prescription by:
a) making unfaithful inaccurate manuscripts,
b) making unfaithful inaccurate translations.

Among the worst of corrupted manuscripts are the Vaticanus and Sinaiticus. Westcott and Hort doctored these manuscripts to give the world a corrupted Greek New Testament, which has been a major source text of Modern English Versions.

Modern translators have adopted the "Dynamic Equivalence" method of translation substituting men's thoughts for God's words. These men have changed the Prescription. Result: Modern English Bible Versions, all different from the Divine Original, all corrupt.

THOUGHT: Every vital doctrine in Modern English Versions has been corrupted.
PRAYER: Open my eyes to behold wondrous things out of Thy law.

HELPING GOD COMMUNICATE!

Believe it or not, but God needs help!

Communication from man to man works by the "word for word" principle. Common courtesy demands that we honour another man's words. Who would risk offending another person by changing his words?

But communication from God to man is another matter. The "word for word" method of the KJB is incomprehensible to modern man. He is asking, *"Yea, hath God said..."* (Gen 3:1). What use is it to have a Book whose "archaic language and idiom" are bound in the culture of the past? God's message is in trouble!

Modern translators have found the answer: God's message made "static" by the outdated "Verbal Equivalence" can be made "dynamic" and "alive" by the "Dynamic Equivalence" method. God's words must be replaced by men's thoughts!

Will God be offended by men changing His words? Far from it, the modern translator is a co-worker, merely helping God communicate better! This in essence is the evil genius of Modern English Bible translators: the exercise of man's superior intellect to give modern bibles a new language and idiom, to replace God's words with men's thoughts. The result: a hundred corrupt Modern English Versions polluted by men's thoughts.

But what does God say? *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord"* (Isa 55:8). Can modern scholars think "God's thoughts"? To think so is arrogant foolishness. The good old-fashioned KJB preserves the "word for word" fidelity.

THOUGHT: God's Word warns of *"doctrines of devils"* (1 Tim 4:1) in the end time.
PRAYER: Lord, save me from corrupt Bible versions.

DAYS OF THE GAYS (1)

God's Word foretells of a global upsurge of homosexual activity *"in the days of the Son of man"* (Luke 17:26), ie immediately before our Lord returns. This prophecy has seen remarkable fulfilment in the latter half of the twentieth century. On the one hand, socially progressive societies of the West have acquiesced to the open, brazen, and rampant exhibition of homosexual partnerships (both male and female) and the demand for "gay and lesbian rights." On the other hand, there has been a wholesale retreat on the part of the authorities – legal and ecclesiastical. The law makers (whose ranks are infiltrated, infected) have progressively relaxed the law to accommodate the increasingly lawless lifestyle, while the Church (whose ranks are equally infiltrated, infected) has abandoned God's Word and God's Law. Homosexuality is now an established and accepted part of the church scene, honourable and respectable.

Question: What does God's Word say to all this? Has God's law relaxed? Or changed with time? Modern churchmen and theologians would like to think so, and persuade men to believe likewise.

But the moral law of God changes not. God has one righteous standard stated in the Ten Commandments by which all men are bound, and by which all men one day will be judged. The Seventh Commandment *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exod 20:14) forbids any and all sexual activity outside the "one-man-one-wife" lifelong marriage bond. This precisely is God's law, God's plan for man's happiness and for all time. *"For to be carnally minded is death ... because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God ... So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God"* (Rom 8:6-8). Homosexuality is carnality of the most filthy and unnatural sort.

THOUGHT: Physical living ends in spiritual death.
PRAYER: Save me from the carnal lifestyle.

DAYS OF THE GAYS (2)

A major sign of our Lord's Second Coming is the return of the days of Lot on earth. What are the days of Lot? Read Genesis 19. Lot had settled in Sodom where he was *"vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked"* (2 Pet 2:7). Sodomy is synonymous with wanton sexual promiscuity, particularly the homosexual relationship, both male and female. For its defiant and outrageous rebellion against God's holy law, Sodom was buried in one day by fire and brimstone out of heaven, a warning to end time sodomites.

The days of Sodom are back on earth, with a vengeance. Writing in England (July 1998), Parliament was in the midst of a major debate to allow consenting couples the legal right of homosexual relationships at age 16. The House of Commons' majority vote was blocked by the House of Lords' overwhelming disapproval. What has the Church to say?

The Archbishop George Carey voting with the Lords said, "Only a sick society allows gay sex at 16." He argued for legislation to be "rooted in sound moral values," for a "morally healthy society" and "a moral framework based on traditional Christian principle" (TIMES 22.7.98). But neither he nor anyone else pointed out that homosexuality at eighteen or twenty-one or any age is an abomination and an offence against God's law and an offence against decent society.

But England (and Western society) has forsaken the law of common decency. Notorious gay, Elton John, sang at Princess Diana's funeral service at Westminster Abbey in August 1997. By year end, he was knighted by the Queen. But fifty years ago, Elton John would have gone to jail when the English law was more akin to God's. The days of Sodom have come to England.

THOUGHT: Just because "everybody approves" does not make it right.
PRAYER: Lord, save us from the days of the gays.

"O GOD, BE NOT FAR FROM ME"

This is the happy man's prayer, for the happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. Just as we need the sun to receive its life-sustaining heat, so we need the Lord for His enlivening warmth. The world's joys and comforts are vanity. Only the ways of God give real and lasting enjoyment and satisfaction.

Men of the world rush along madly in quest of passing pleasures. Our Lord calls it the broad way that leadeth to destruction and many there be, which go in that way. A Christian woman was always very kind to her unbelieving husband, for she said, "This is the only way I know to show him the love of God, and as I keep close to the Lord, one day perhaps he, too, will come to the Saviour."

"O God, be not far from me" (Ps 71:12) should be every Christian's daily prayer. Keeping close to the Lord means keeping away from the world's vain pursuits. No Christian is safe from the snares and pitfalls laid by the god of this world when he strays away from God. Satan easily attacks the Christian who is not walking close to the Lord.

The one who departs from his God becomes spiritually starved. He endeavours to feed on vanities, and before long his feet begin to slip, and he slides into the Valley of Humiliation. Every false step is fraught with peril, for the Tempter is never far away. Then, O Christian friend, turn back before it is too late. Call to the Lord: "Grant me grace to walk humbly with Thee. Be not far from me, O God."

THOUGHT: Safety is to be near God.
PRAYER: Lord, keep me close to Thee.

"DELIGHT THYSELF ALSO IN THE LORD"

Dear Christian reader, have you come to experience the delight which is to be found *"in the Lord,"* and in Him alone? Our Christian faith is not the drab service or needful duty which some ignorantly imagine it to be, but in truth, for one who knows and loves the Saviour, it is one of abundant joy and delight flowing from the heart of God.

Ungodly persons and mere professors never look upon Christianity as anything delightful. To them, it is a necessity, an imposition, a burden of conscience. If they devote themselves to their religious duties, it is with a sense of personal gain or for fear of divine reprisal. The thought of delight seems strange and foreign to their way of thinking.

But in Christ, delight and faith are intimately united so that the gates of hell cannot separate them. The ways of discipleship are pleasantness, and all His paths are peace. Such overflowing blessedness is to be found in the Lord that the saints, far from serving Him out of custom, would gladly follow Him even as the martyrs of bygone days, "through fire, dungeon and sword." Ponder, dear reader, the words of this hymn:

Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast:
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

O Thou the Balsam of the garden,
O Thou the sweet rose of Sharon!
Thou art the Lily of the Valley
How shall I part with Thee?

THOUGHT: There is joy and delight in service.
PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for being my soul's delight.

"WE HAVE SINNED"

Alas! That we Christians have sinned against the thrice holy God. Favoured as we have been, we have been ungrateful. Privileged above others, we have not brought forth fruit as we ought. We blush when we look back upon our sinful past. Those dark offences in days before we were regenerate, they have been forgiven and forgotten. But those sins committed afterwards are offences against light and against love – light which has shone into our hearts, and love in which we have rejoiced.

The later sins, how the fallen saint regrets and repines: *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"* Think of David! Great were his sins, but greater still his repentance. *"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer"* (Ps 32:3-4). With bitter tears and soul-deep groans, he cast himself at the foot of the Saviour, begging nothing but cleansing at the mercy-seat.

Then look at Peter. How he failed his Lord! But he turned around and wept bitterly. Consider your own sins. No matter what they are and how many, turn to the Saviour, for *"Thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and plenteous in mercy and truth"* (Ps 86:15). *"... And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins ..."* (1 John 2:1-2).

THOUGHT: Our Lord says, *"Go, and sin no more"* (John 8:11).
PRAYER: Lead me not into temptation but deliver me from evil.

"GOD HATH MADE ME TO LAUGH"

God's doings are above the power of nature, and contrary to its laws. To Sarah, He gave a son when she was *"old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women"* (Gen 18:11). God's promise to Abraham took twenty-five years to come to pass, not because He was slow, but because He kept to divine schedule. Our Lord is never rushed.

Abraham called his son Isaac, which means "laughter." He was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born. And Sarah said, *"God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me"* (Gen 21:6). Sarah's laughter was from the Lord, the laughter of supernatural blessing. In her own words, *"Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age."*

"The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Prov 10:22).

God's doings in salvation also are above the power of nature and contrary to natural law. So it is beyond all ordinary rules that a poor helpless sinner, unworthy and undone, should be redeemed from hell-fire, and brought into the family of God, bearing in the soul the indwelling Spirit and the new life of the Lord Jesus. The marvel is that I whose nature was dry, withered, and barren, have been restored to the Father, and made productive to bring forth fruit unto holiness.

Well may my mouth be filled with the joyous songs of Zion and the laughter of the redeemed.

THOUGHT: Is any thing too hard for the Lord?
PRAYER: Jesus still leads on, till the race be won.

AN OPEN DOOR

Our Lord Jesus walks among the seven golden candlesticks, the churches of His care. To the Church of Philadelphia He says, *"I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name."*

Let me share with readers the RPG Daily Bible Reading Ministry. It was an "open door" given to us in Singapore in 1982, in many ways a fulfilment of Revelation 3:8. We had *"a little strength,"* little experience, few resources. But we kept the Word of God after the tradition of our founding fathers.

The Bible-Presbyterian Church was raised of God in 1950 *"for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"* and for the defence of the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. For thirty years we had used "Scripture Union Daily Bread" as a dependable guide for our members' daily reading. In 1980, the SU Notes began to question the authenticity of the Genesis record, and to attack the Word of God. Provoked by this betrayal of truth and alarmed by the poison which threatened our congregation, we had no choice but to "write our own."

From a modest beginning the RPG Notes grew, its circulation reaching to all parts of the globe, and today after thirty years, each issue is sent out to the blessing of many thousands and is also made available online. Each issue is also translated into Chinese, Indonesian, Kiswahili and Myanmar. A junior and a teens edition of the RPG are also published. This is God's open door of Gospel opportunity because we have kept the Word of God and we have not denied the name of the Lord. Praise the Lord for those who faithfully promote and distribute RPG's faithful God-honouring reading notes.

THOUGHT: *"Earnestly contend for the faith"* (Jude 1:3).
PRAYER: Lord, raise more to also take a stand for Thee and Thy Word.

"THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH"

Every child of God comes under the care of the Almighty, bound to Him by covenant promise which is not subject to doubt or change. The Christian believer is kept by God's upholding grace, with the assurance of His infallible and inerrant Word: *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand"* (John 10:28-29).

This precious promise is also in Isaiah 54:10: *"For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee."*

These and other promises of God in Christ our Lord give the greatest comfort to all true believers. If you are a child of God, truly born again, and joined to the Lord Jesus Christ, you will never perish.

How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend!
His love is as great as His pow'r,
And knows neither measure nor end!

But what says our Shepherd divine?
For His holy Word we must keep!
This flock hath the Father made mine;
I lay down my life for the sheep!

'Tis life everlasting I give;
My blood was the price my sheep cost;
Not one that on me shall believe,
Shall ever be finally lost!

– Joseph Hart

THOUGHT: Not one of God's sheep shall be lost.
PRAYER: Give me faith to trust and not to doubt.

ARE YOU LOSING YOUR CHILD? (1)

Christian parents, like all parents, love their children. Every child is precious, more so in this day of small families. For the sake of a newborn child, parents spare no expense or effort or sacrifice to give the helpless thing a bright future. A hundred inconveniences and painstaking details are worth it, if some good is being done "for my child." Does this not touch a chord in every parent's heart?

While so much is being planned and mobilised for the physical and social well-being of your child, is there something or anything at all comparable being done for his spiritual state? An honest survey will startle us with the carefree forgetfulness or neglect in this area of parental responsibility. Why is this so? Is the soul less important than the body? Or is it less needful?

This is a serious matter: we are talking about precious souls waiting to be won for Christ, not about pets like cats or dogs. Your child is irreplaceable, priceless, fast growing. Will he become a child of God? Or a child of the world? Does it matter? What do you say? Every day of inaction is a day lost to the world, and the world is not for us, and the world is winning, all the time, "hands down." The world does not need your help to enrol your child into its ranks. Simply do nothing. "Don't rock the boat. Our home is quite comfortable. Our child's milestones are in good order. We are very happy, thank you!"

"But what shall it profit a parent, if he should gain the whole child for the world and lose his soul for Christ? or what will you give in exchange for your lost child?" (Adapted, Mark 8:36-37).

THOUGHT: My child's soul is my responsibility.
PRAYER: Lord, save my child. Use me to lead him to Thee.

ARE YOU LOSING YOUR CHILD? (2)

We continue from our last reading on the matter of parental responsibility in Christian homes today. We have a concern simply because the future is at stake: your future as a possibly very regretful parent, and your child's future as a likely very worldly adult, lost to the world. Your present schemes are working beautifully, every plan for your child's future is turning out good – except the spiritual.

Neither time nor the world is on your side. Every day lost for Christ adds one day to the world's advantage and your child's distancing from Heaven. The world is everywhere, sadly. But most sadly, the world has taken over many, or most, Christian homes. Just open your eyes and do a "spot check." How many of the articles in your house work for the Lord and how many for the god of this world? List them: magazines, newspapers, advertising materials, media instruments (TV, DVD players, computers, handphones, tablets), wall displays, toys, recreation things (gears for golf, swimming, sailing, boating, aerobics, tennis, roller-blading, etc).

What is wrong? Consider the time, attention, affection and devotion all of these things demand, and how little time or energy, or desire, is left over for the Lord. "Oh poor Jesus, but we are so full: there's no room for you in our house!"

Read the Bible passages for today with prayer and soul searching. God help us wake up to the gravity of losing our most precious and lovely children to the world.

THOUGHT: The world does not need my help: just do nothing!
PRAYER: Lord, move me today to act for Thee.

WINNING YOUR CHILD FOR CHRIST

When we reflect on the irreparable loss of sons and daughters due to parental neglect and indifference in their growing years, it must cause not a few regretful parents to shed unseen tears, and some hopeful ones to take remedial or preventive action. Whatever the case, let us return to the Lord of all compassion and plead for mercy and grace to help in our time of need.

Before the Lord, let us promise to honour Him with the first place in our home. Does Jesus reside in your home? Is He the Head of your house? Your affirmative answer must be translated into positive action to remove and destroy all that are plainly against the spiritual well-being of the dwellers. Anything that promotes carnality, immorality and worldliness to the detriment of spiritual growth, must be removed.

Replace these with the Word of God in Christian literature and Bible wall plaques. All these serve as silent reminders of our heavenly calling, and the absolute necessity of giving it daily expression as a Christian family by "Family Worship," a most blessed and needful activity, yet the most neglected in Christian homes.

"But our home is doing quite well without it!" But the Head of the home, our loving Saviour and Father in heaven, awaits our company and fellowship! *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me"* (Rev 3:20). It is simply a matter of a loving relationship. Do you love His company?

THOUGHT: Lovest thou me more than these?
PRAYER: Lord, Thou knowest I love Thee.

"LOOK ON THE FIELDS"

To the disciples of old, our Lord called attention to the whitened fields ripe for harvest, a harvest not of grain but of souls. The note of urgency is for every age simply because men and women in every age, without Christ, are rushing headlong to everlasting destruction, and death is ever near. But the urgency to bear the Gospel to lost souls now is doubly urgent because the Lord's return is "at the doors."

Our Lord exhorted His disciples to reach out to Gentiles as well as Jews – every soul is precious and every soul needs the Word of Life. Today's harvest field consists of billions of benighted souls: Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and many professing Christians who wear the name but without knowledge, without salvation.

Perishing souls need to hear that *"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom 5:8). *"Lift up your eyes!"* The Saviour's words speak down the ages of time to twenty-first century believers. See and feel for those who are literally on the brink of eternal damnation, whom only the Word of Life can rescue.

That Word of Life has lost none of its power, but the magnitude of the task is many times greater. Then hear our Lord say, *"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (*Matt 9:37-38). The joy of harvest is known only to those who labour in God's harvest field. Do you?

THOUGHT: Evangelism starts best with one.
PRAYER: Lord, let me GO for Thee.

"BEHOLD I COME QUICKLY!"

The Lord is coming as He promised. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the Creator and Judge. He is the Lord of History. He sets history in motion; He comes again to order its conclusion.

"And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev 22:12). Soon the Lord of all creation will return to Planet Earth!

We have an urgent message: ready or not, willing or not, the Lord Jesus will come, and will not tarry. He comes to take an account of everyone – every man, woman and child. He comes as Saviour for His own, and Judge of all the rest.

Are you one of His? Have you believed on Him and called on His saving name? *"...For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved"* (Acts 4:12). Only Jesus can save you from everlasting hell fire. Only He can save you from your sins and make you a child of God, and give you a place in His everlasting kingdom.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved! And you will be ready for His coming: no other name, no other way to make you ready for the Lord.

To the believer, the child of God who has been purchased with His precious blood, "Are you serving the Lord with heart and soul, mind and strength?" Our Lord says, *"I come quickly"* (Rev 3:11). Quickly may be next decade or sooner. Who can tell? Only be ready!

THOUGHT: Behold, now is the day of salvation!
PRAYER: Lord, alert me to the nearness of Thy coming.

SIGN OF HIS COMING (1)

Only the blind do not see the many signs of our Lord's return now appearing on the global scene, like red lights flashing everywhere. One certain "diagnostic sign" sends forth an unmistakable signal of His nearness:

CHRISTENDOM HAS FALLEN AWAY!

God's Word is clear and unequivocal. 2 Thessalonians 2:3 says*: "... that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed ..."*

The *"falling away"* speaks of churches and Christians forsaking the faith they once held, and sliding away into unbelief, to embrace doctrines contrary to the truth, denying *"the faith which was once delivered unto the saints"* (Jude 3), and even the Lord that bought them.

This *"falling away"* has been active even from apostolic times, but in the end time it will become massive and universal, and engulf the churches and Christians which once stood true to the Word, but now no longer. The first *"falling away"* was that of the Church of Rome in the fourth century (which included the Orthodox Church). The mainline Protestant churches fell away from the nineteenth century, and finally, the Evangelicals in the mid twentieth century.

All Christendom, except for a small remnant, is now fallen away into the One World One Church Movement called "Oikoumene" described in Revelation 13 and 17. The final scenario is in its final stages of taking shape.

This is the sign that our Lord's return is imminent. Question: Are you ready?

THOUGHT: I cannot stop it but I must stop aiding it.
PRAYER: Lord, keep me steadfast and unmoveable.

SIGN OF HIS COMING (2)

The most astounding about-turn in the history of the Church is the Evangelicals' *"falling away"* in the late twentieth century. The Evangelicals, once valiant in the defence of the faith against Liberalism, Evolutionism, Ecumenism and Romanism, cut their separatist moorings and drifted into the Romeward tide. That was about mid century.

By 1994, the Evangelicals publicly acknowledged what was a fait accompli of years, that they and the Catholics were together (ECT I 1994). This was doubly confirmed by a second declaration in 1997 (ECT II 1997). The last bastion of Protestantism has fallen! The road to Rome and Oikoumene is now wide open.

Now a new "gospel" for the twenty-first century is telecast for all the world to take note. On 31 May 1997, over Southern California Television, the Evangelicals' global spokesman, Dr Billy Graham, declared:

"I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they are conscious of it or not, they're members of the Body of Christ ... And that's what God is doing today. He's calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they have been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think they are saved, and that they're going to be with us in heaven."

This is the astounding about-turn of the century – the sign of our Lord's soon return.

THOUGHT: Satan's deception is made respectable by Dr Graham.
PRAYER: Deliver me from the end time deception.

SIGN OF HIS COMING (3)

God's Word takes away all "guess-work" as to what the end time *"falling away"* is about. It is all part of Satan's grand scheme: the reunion of all Christendom under the one *"who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God"* (2 Thess 2:4).

The "breakthrough" to this end time development was the Evangelicals' capitulation to Rome, and their embracing of *"another gospel"* (Gal 1:6) as spelt out by Dr Billy Graham. This paves the way for all Christendom to be re-unified, with the 500 million Protestants completely deceived *"because they received not the love of the truth"* and *"for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thess 2:10-12).

The initial reaction of Christians to ECT I and II was, "Impossible, unbelieveable! Evangelicals will never join with Rome!" But actions speak louder than words. The writing is on the wall. Evangelicals not only are on the road to Rome to link hands with Roman Catholics, but they will shortly march along with the other faiths to form Oikoumene. Fact is stranger than fiction but God's Word is truth.

To you who hold to the old-time Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, to those of like precious faith, we say, *"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong"* (1 Cor 16:13). Look not to men or to numbers. Look only to the Lord. The amazing and unbelievable falling away says it all. The Lord's appearing is near, nearer than you think!

THOUGHT: The only way to be ready is BE READY!
PRAYER: Even so, come Lord Jesus!

"COME OUT ... BE SEPARATE"

The twentieth century Church scene opened with a titanic struggle: Bible-believing Christians versus unbelieving Modernists and Liberals. The tide of history could not be stemmed. "Modern Thought" espousing Evolutionism, Rationalism, Humanism, Liberalism and Modernism, swept all in its path. Great institutions such as Yale, Harvard, Princeton and others were carried away by the tide of the *"falling away."*

By mid twentieth ventury, the remaining custodians of the faith, the Evangelicals, showed signs of fatigue in their "fundamentalist" stand. Led by Harold Ockenga and Billy Graham, they took to a "middle of the road" position of non-separation – the slippery path of Collaboration, Compromise and Capitulation. In the fifties, they sowed the wind of Collaboration. And they reaped the whirlwind of Capitulation.

The last road block having crumbled, the road to Rome is wide open, and rapidly filling (with Liberal Protestants in the lead) with Orthodox, Church of England and Episcopalians, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Assemblies of God and others, all linking hands, surging toward the Eternal City. Prominent among the vast crowd are the Charismatics, Evangelicals, and Promise Keepers, shortly joined by all the other non-Christian faiths.

But our Lord sends a message from Heaven, *"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues"* (Rev 18:4). And we say in response: get out and stay out!

THOUGHT: Safety is in the Lord, not in numbers.
PRAYER: Lord, I will follow only Thee

"THE LORD JESUS SHALL BE REVEALED"

The greatest sadness and irreparable shock to unbelieving Christendom will be the sudden awakening to the Lord Jesus' return in the clouds of heaven, just as the angels had said at our Lord's ascension: *"...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11). The fact is unbelieving Christendom merely pays lip service to the doctrine of the Second Coming of our Lord.

What will it be like when Jesus comes? Our Lord will come *"... with his mighty angels, in flaming fire ..."* (2 Thess 1:7-8). He will come on a white horse, and the armies of heaven will follow Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean (Rev 19:11,14). By the Word which comes out of His mouth, our Lord will judge and subdue the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron, for He returns as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Together with unbelieving Christendom, the One World System "Oikoumene" will be jolted out of its false security to face the ultimate reality of the ascended Lord Jesus returning in power and glory. Here is an eyewitness description of the second coming as previewed by John: *"And the kings of the earth, ... the great men, ... rich men, ... chief captains, ... mighty men, ... every bondman, ... every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said 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?"* (Rev 6:15-17).

THOUGHT: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and escape the wrath to come.
PRAYER: Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief.

THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS (1)

That there is life beyond earth for believers is the clear promise of God recorded in Holy Scripture. There is a deathless, endless, God-given eternal life for all who have been washed and cleansed in the blood of the Lamb, *"born again."* For any reader who thinks that "death ends all," stop and think again: death only opens the door to the eternal state, to a vast new world never before seen by mortal eyes. In fact there are two worlds: one with the Lord, in unspeakable glory and peace; the other with the Devil and his angels, in irreversible torment and regret. So let us be doubly sure: death does not end all.

Job in his unspeakable sorrow and sickness was given an early insight into the after-state. As he lay at death's door, the Lord gave him a glimpse of the believer's prospect after death: a time of waiting, followed by a change at the call and command of God. *"Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee"* (Job 14:15). Amazing revelation to an ancient believer, and most comforting to the dying!

To the unbelieving Jews and the "nominal Christian" who had no clear knowledge of the after-death, our Lord said, *"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation"* (John 5:28-29).

Our blessed hope is the Saviour's life-restoring call, and our response: *"Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee!"* Our Lord has assured us: *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"* (John 10:27). At the voice of our great Shepherd, believers of all ages shall live again!

THOUGHT: As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
PRAYER: Lord, I thank Thee for the life to come.

THE RESURRECTION OF BELIEVERS (2)

Thank God He gives us sure knowledge of what is in store for believers. Therefore we do not speculate or get excited by accounts of "near death experiences." It pleased our Lord to reveal to His servant Job, in his sorrow and suffering, the comforting prospect of life beyond death, through our resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Listen to these remarkable words: *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."*

Death holds no terror for the believer, the truly born again Christian, because he is already united with the risen Christ. Job calls Him *"my redeemer."* If you have Jesus as "your Redeemer" you have the "Conqueror of Death" by your side as your High Priest and Advocate. He has power over death and life, and He is returning soon.

Here is a mystery, revealed to believers (1 Cor 15:51-52): *"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead (in Christ) shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."* Then in 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17*: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (precede) them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."*

THOUGHT: In Christ we need have no fear of death.
PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for the blessed hope.

"WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM"

Dear Christian reader, if you are truly born again into the family of God, trusting only in the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who died to redeem you from the darkness of sin, to wash you in His own blood, you are a child of God – a son of the Most High. Its full meaning and implication cannot be fully appreciated "on this side of Heaven." As it is written, *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God"* (1 Cor 2:9-10).

Our status as *"sons of God"* will not be fully realized until we see our blessed Redeemer face to face. *"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part ..."* (1 Cor 13:12). Today we live in hope, and with God's redeemed people we await the Lord's return with greatest longing. As the Apostle Paul says, *"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God"* (Rom 8:19). This *"manifestation"* is the *"mystery"* referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 when *"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ... the dead* (in Christ) *shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."*

Finally, we are told, *"When he shall appear, we shall be like him ..."* (1 John 3:2). We shall be *"like Him"* in His purity, sinlessness, immortality, completely made new, forever freed from the corruption of the old Adam. This is the glory of the *"sons of God."*

THOUGHT: All thanks and praise to my great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.
PRAYER: Make me to be "more like the Master."

"CAUGHT UP"

The believer, born again child of God, has a great future away from earth. His sole purpose here is to be a witness for the Lord and to live to His glory. His future is above, and he knows it, and works for it. *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Phil 3:20). We are children of promise, and we live daily in expectation of its fulfilment.

Never lose sight of our Lord's promise: *"...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:2-3). Our Lord said He would return from Heaven before He was crucified. The angels said He would return the same way He ascended to Heaven. We believe He will come to "receive us unto Himself."

This is every believer's hope: our only hope, our blessed hope. Except the Lord takes us up, away from this perishing earth, we have no hope. Let not anyone suppose that it is "space fiction fantasy." God has given us three precedents. We cannot deny them: Enoch walked with God and God took him; Elijah was caught up in broad daylight, whisked away by horses and a chariot of fire; our Lord went up also in broad daylight. We too: when the Lord shall descend the clouds of heaven, with the shout of the archangel and the trumpet of God; we shall be changed, in the twinkling of an eye, and we shall be caught up to be with the Lord, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Do you have this blessed hope? A most comforting hope!

THOUGHT: Those who are not caught up face great tribulation.
PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for coming for me.

ASLEEP IN JESUS

John 11:35 is the shortest, and saddest, verse in the Bible. See the Lord of Life weeping at the graveside over the death of a friend. Mary's only brother, Lazarus, was dead, and weeping with her were the Jews who came with her. But tears of grief can never return the dead to life: they merely relieve our pent-up feelings and make us feel better for a time.

When our Lord learned of Lazarus's sickness, He already knew that he would die. Nevertheless, He told the disciples, *"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep"* (John 11:11). Then our Lord stayed on two days still in the same place where He was, for good reason, in order that a more notable miracle might be accomplished.

In Jesus, Lazarus' death was but an interlude of rest: asleep, until the Lord awoke him. Four days in the grave would have caused any corpse to stink. So Martha said to Jesus, *"Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days"* (John 11:39). But Lazarus was only asleep. So, at the Lord's command he came forth, without a whiff of decay.

Imagine the joy and jubilation that filled the humble home of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, and how it must have radiated far and wide. But alas! Lazarus lived only to die another day. Then it was for a more prolonged sleep, until Jesus would call him again, together with unnumbered millions of other sleepers in Jesus, to come forth. One day this vast multitude shall arise, who now are asleep in Jesus. That is the believers' blessed hope, and that day is almost here!

THOUGHT: The rest of the dead will not arise for another thousand years. (Rev 20:5)
PRAYER: Lord of Life, evermore live in my heart.

AFTERWARD - WITH GOD

For the Christian his best is not now, but afterward. Think of the calm which follows a storm, the glorious sunshine after days of rain. For the soldiers returned from a hard fought battle is the "victory banquet." Or Christian after mastering the Hill Difficulty, he is rewarded in the Arbour of Rest. Or after the heavy going through the Valley of Humiliation, having fought with Apollyon, the Shining One appears, with the healing branch from the Tree of Life (adapted from *Pilgrim's Progress*).

When Christ comes into our lives, He puts an end to the turmoil and storm of our tormented sinful lifestyle, and His peace, so sweet and tranquil, takes full control – afterward. See then the happy estate of a Christian! In Christ, the end is better than the beginning. There is always a blessed afterward. The Christian, like Paul, loses all to win Christ, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord surpasses all else. He grows rich by his losses, rises by his falls, lives by his dying, is filled by being emptied. These are the rewards and blessings of the afterward on earth.

But the real and ultimate afterward is in heaven. David the king by faith expressed an earnest desire and longing for the afterward with God: *"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple"* (Ps 27:4). That is the Christian's eventual afterward. For now, therefore, let us bear patiently our present cross, for the crown must come afterward. Let patience have her perfect work.

THOUGHT: Today we are only passing through.
PRAYER: I thank Thee, Lord, for the afterward of heaven.

"SO RUN, THAT YE MAY OBTAIN"

Simply running is not everything. There is much in the way which we take. A swift foot uphill and down dale will not keep pace with one running on level ground. How is it with my spiritual journey? Am I struggling up the hill of my own works, and tumbling down the ravines of my follies and humiliations? Such running makes little spiritual headway, being fraught with disappointments and setbacks.

But for those who will go forward by faith, waiting upon the Lord, He opens to them a plain path. Committing oneself to the Almighty makes all the difference. *"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint"* (Isa 40:31).

Jesus our Lord says, *"I am the way"* (John 14:6). He is a plain and pleasant way, a safe way for tottering feet and feeble knees of troubled sinners, for His is the way of peace. Have you not heard His voice pleading: "This is the way; walk ye in it"? Why then are you running in another track, pursuing after priestcraft or tongues experience or signs and wonders? Be wise! *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Prov 14:12).

Men vie for transient honours in the arena of sports, and one outruns another. If they throw in everything they have to obtain a corruptible crown, ought not we who have before us an incorruptible prize, resolve in all solemn earnestness to so run that we may obtain? Keep, then, your body under subjection, laying aside every weight of sin, and run with patience the race that is set before you.

THOUGHT: In life's race we are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses.
PRAYER: Lord, lead me on in the safe way.

SINGING IN THE LORD

The time when Christians begin to sing in the ways of the Lord is when they first lose their burdens at the foot of the cross. Not even the songs of angels can compare with the first strains of joyous praise which flow from the inmost soul of the forgiven child of God. In John Bunyan's story, he tells how when poor Pilgrim's backbreaking burden fell away at the cross, he gave three great leaps, and went on his way singing:

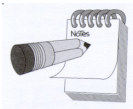
"Blest Cross! Blest Sepulchre! Blest rather be
The Man that there was put to shame for me!"

Dear child of God, can you recall the day when your fetters fell off? Do you remember how the Lord met you, and said, *"...I have loved thee with an everlasting love ... I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions...For I will be merciful ...*(thy) *sins and* (thy) *iniquities will I remember no more"* (Jer 31:3, Isa 44:22; Heb 8:12). O what relief it is when Jesus lifts away our load of sin!

Only Christians have real and lasting cause for song. The singing of the world fades like a dream. Only children of God's heavenly kingdom can sing the everlasting songs of Zion. We sing at the commencement of our Christian life; we sing at all seasons; we say with the Psalmist, *"I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live ..."* (Ps 104:33).

But our song goes on even after we have lived this life. When we shall gather before the throne of the heavenly Majesty, in brighter frame and with immortal voices, we shall sing a new song to the praise of Him who opened heaven's gate for us: *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"* (Rev 5:12).

THOUGHT: Up there we shall be "always singing, never sinning."
PRAYER: Lord, give me a voice to sing for Thee.



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