

# “AS THE SMALL RAIN”

by

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## CHAPTER TWO

### “NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION”

(II Corinthians 6:2)

#### NO FREEDOM IN FLATTERY

THERE is one sin greatly condemned in the Bible against which you almost never hear anyone preach. It is the sin of flattery, and how largely it is practiced these days. Some flatter with no malicious intent. They desire popularity and want people to like them, and so they cultivate the habit of saying that which will please the hearer without regard to its truth; or, they have read some popular book on psychology, which tells them that the way to make friends is to flatter, and they put into practice this advice with never a thought that they are being dishonest.

Others flatter for more malicious reasons. Politicians have discovered that the surest way to cause an opponent to make a fool of himself is to flatter him into doing something which in an uninflated state of mind he would have better judgment than to attempt. Others indulge in flattery to get something from the object of their flattery. They are like the fox in the fable who flattered the crow by praising his beautiful voice. When the crow, full of vanity, opened his beak to sing, he dropped the piece of cheese he was holding, and the fox gobbled it up.

Some people flatter from sheer cowardice. They lack the courage to speak the truth. They will say what another expects of them rather than what they know to be so.

There are preachers who are guilty here. Instead of preaching against the sins of unregenerate human hearts, they flatter their hearers with smooth-sounding messages on the greatness of the human race. Sinners lost and undone feel no conviction as they sit under their ministry, but go out full of self-satisfaction to continue in their sin. They are trapped pinioned in a net of smooth words, when if they had been told the truth about themselves and their own sinful condition and pointed to the Lord Jesus, they would have found in truth and in Him who is Truth, freedom from the chains of sin. Truly, **“a man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet”** (Proverbs 29:5).

There is no flattering of the Adamic nature and of sinners in God’s Word. Unregenerate men hate and despise the Word of God because it tells them the truth about themselves. Men do not want the truth. Men prefer flattery, but it is only in the truth that freedom is found.

Let not the wise their wisdom boast,  
The mighty glory in their might,  
The rich in flattering riches trust,  
Which take their everlasting flight

The rush of numerous years bears down  
The most gigantic strength of man;  
And where is all his wisdom gone,  
When dust he turns to dust again?

One only gift can justify  
The boasting soul that knows his God;  
When Jesus doth His blood apply,  
I glory in His sprinkled blood.

The Lord, my righteousness, I praise,  
I triumph in the love divine,  
The wisdom, wealth and strength of grace,  
In Christ to endless ages mine.

— Charles Wesley

## **PAGAN AMERICA**

AMERICA is not a Christian country. There are Christians in America. Christian influences went into the building of our nation and the impact of Christian truth is still felt to some extent in our national law and life, but America is essentially and predominantly pagan.

The great majority of our people worship the same gods which were revered in ancient Greece and Rome. Of course, they are not called by their classical names nor recognized as deities, but they are worshiped nonetheless, though graven images are not set up and statues and altars are not erected to them.

When the ancients worshiped Jupiter or Mars or Venus, they were bowing down before some attribute or characteristic of their own human nature which they had deified. Athena was the deification of wisdom, Mars of war, Venus of lust. The deities were made in the image of their worshipers.

Today in America, though men do not burn incense on the altars dedicated to deities who are projections of their own characteristics and impulses and passions, they worship and serve these attributes and passions, for the thing which becomes supreme in their lives becomes the god of their lives.

There are some men who worship their own intellects. Their minds are their gods; wisdom is their chief pursuit. The standard by which they measure values is the standard of their own reasoning. Others sacrifice everything to greed; avarice is their god. They are devotees of wealth.

Others are mastered by their appetite for drink. No priest of Bacchus was ever more zealous than they. Many live to serve the lust of the flesh and worship the base passions of their nature.

America is a pagan nation. America is not a Christian nation. It never will be until Christ becomes the Lord of our people.

Dread Jehovah! God of nations!  
From Thy temple in the skies,  
Hear Thy people's supplications:  
Now for their deliverance rise.

Lo! with deep contrition turning,  
In Thy holy place we bend;  
Hear us, fasting, praying, mourning;  
Hear us, spare us, and defend.

Though our sins, our hearts confounding,  
Long and loud for vengeance call, Thou hast mercy more abounding;  
Jesus' blood can cleanse them all.  
Let that mercy veil transgression;  
Let that blood our guilt efface: Save Thy people from oppression;  
Save from spoil Thy holy place.

— Thomas Cotterill

## **MEN OF GOOD WILL**

ABOUT two thousand years ago, Christ was born. Ever since men have sought the benefits which have come to earth as a result of His presence among the sons of men. At the same time, they have rejected Him.

How much blessing has come as a result of His life and teaching! Had He not been born, there would be no hospitals, no old people's homes, no orphanages, no asylums. Mercy, education, charity, equity—these always follow the preaching of the Gospel. Children have a debt to the Babe in the manger for the lot of children is happier where His Name is known. Motherhood received its crown from the One who on the cross said to John, "**Behold thy mother**" (John 19:27). Where the Christian religion is taught, woman is lifted from the slavery which she occupies under pagan teaching.

Man has welcomed all these benefits, but many have rejected Him from whom they come and turned their backs upon Him of whose way of life they are the fruit. They have sought the truth and rejected the Teacher of the truth. They have welcomed mercy but rejected God's Son who came to earth as the Gift of divine mercy. Is it any wonder that almost two thousand years after His birth the world is still torn asunder by war and aflame with strife!

How can there be peace when the hearts of men are turned against the Prince of Peace? When He sojourned among men, God's Son "**came unto his own, and his own received him not**" (John 1:11), and down the ages ever since the world which He made has rejected Him. But always there has been a little group whose hearts were open to Him. It is to these few in every age and generation that peace has come. They are the men of good will in whose hearts the Prince of Peace has been enthroned. There He reigns, giving peace in the midst of all the conflict of nations and clash of opinions and the vain strife of man.

Since Jesus is my Friend,  
And I to Him belong,  
It matters not what foes intend,  
However fierce and strong.

He whispers in my breast  
Sweet words of holy cheer:  
How they who seek in God their rest  
Shall ever find Him near.

How God hath built above,  
A city fair and new,  
Where eye and heart shall see and prove  
What faith has counted true.

My heart for gladness springs,  
It cannot more be sad;  
For very joy it laughs and sings—  
Sees nought but sunshine glad.

The Sun that lights mine eyes  
Is Christ, the Lord I love;  
I sing for joy for that which lies  
Stored up for me above.

— Paul Gerhardt

## MORAL COWARDICE

PONTIUS PILATE was not a vicious man. He was a coward. He lacked the courage of his convictions. He lacked the strength of character to defy public opinion. He was afraid to risk his political position by doing what he knew was right.

As a judge he found Christ innocent of the charges brought against Him. He said, "**I find no fault in this man**" (Luke 23:4). Law and conscience demanded that He be released, but the leaders of Israel were determined to have His blood and "**Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required**" (Luke 23:24).

Pilate preferred to see this “**just man**” slain rather than risk the enmity of the Jewish leaders. He was afraid of what they might say to Caesar and feared that their lies might cost him his position as governor of Judea. There are still plenty of Pilates in politics and in every other business of life as well. They would like to do what they know to be right, but they are afraid to take a position contrary to popular opinion. They think more of their own popularity than they do of justice.

- There are parents who permit their children to do things which are against their own conscience because other young people are doing those things, and because the parents lack the courage to be firm with their own children.
- There are teachers who compromise their convictions rather than offend some members of the school board.
- There are preachers who fail to preach against sin because they are afraid of stepping on the toe of some prominent member of the church.

We need nothing so much as firm conviction and the courage to stand by it. According to tradition, Pilate lost his position as governor of Judea after the crucifixion of Christ, He was recalled to Rome and sent into exile, where he died. Sacrificing his convictions, he sacrificed the respect of all men who know from the Bible the story of his cowardice. The man who compromises always loses the respect of those whose love and favor he seeks to gain.

In the hour of trial,  
Jesus, plead for me;  
Lest by base denial,  
I depart from Thee.

When Thou seest me waver,  
With a look recall,  
Nor for fear or favor  
Suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures  
Would this vain world charm,  
Or its sordid treasures  
Spread to work me harm,

Bring to my remembrance  
Sad Gethsemane,  
Or, in darker semblance,  
Cross-crowned Calvary.

Should Thy mercy send me  
Sorrow, toil and woe;  
Or should pain attend me  
On my path below,

Grant that I may never  
Fail Thy hand to see,  
Grant that I may ever  
Cast my care on Thee.

— James Montgomery

## PORK OR PARADISE

CHRIST came to the country of the Gadarenes, and they asked Him to depart from their coast. Why?

There was a poor outcast possessed of many demons living in the tombs of the hillside. From this fierce, unhappy creature the Lord Jesus Christ cast out the tormenting spirits, permitting them to go into a herd of swine. Unwilling to give habitation to the spirits that had controlled the man, the swine ran into the sea and were drowned (Mark 5:1-17).

These Gadarenes had the wrong sense of value. They thought more of their pigs than they did of a man. They asked the Son of God to leave them because they preferred to see a man in the grip of demons rather than to lose some swine.

Some people are like that today. They think more of temporal gain than they do of eternal values. Some men are so busy attending to business that they have no time for their families, and in struggling to accumulate a fortune they let their own children go to destruction.

There are many people who refuse to let the Lord Jesus Christ come into their lives because they want to hold on to some selfish ambition or evil habit or sinful practice. They reject the Saviour because they do not want to give up some fleeting pleasure or worldly idol. They would rather have a few pigs than the presence of the Son of God and all the joy which His salvation brings. They would rather have hogs than heaven, pork than paradise. Christ says, **“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,”** but the Gadarenes among us prefer to keep their pigs. Indeed, there is a strange kinship between such men and their swine—both are satisfied with the gratification of the senses and both lack appreciation of intangible realities. The Lord Jesus Christ comes with an emphasis on the things of the Spirit—the unseen, permanent things! **“What shall it profit a man,”** says Jesus, **“if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”**

Happy are they, they that love God,  
Whose hearts have Christ confessed,  
Who by His cross have found their life,  
And ‘neath His yoke their rest.

Glad is the praise, sweet are the songs,  
When they together sing;  
And strong the prayers that bow the ear  
Of Heaven’s eternal King.

Christ to their homes giveth His peace,  
And makes their loves His own;  
But, ah, what tares the evil one  
Hath in His garden sown!

Sad were our lot, evil this earth,  
Did not its sorrows prove  
The path whereby the sheep may find  
The fold of Jesus' love.

Then shall they know, they that love Him,  
How all their pain is good;  
And death itself cannot unbind  
Their happy brotherhood.

— Charles Coffin

## **DISTORTED PERSPECTIVE**

ALL too often our perspective is wrong, our sense of values is distorted. We are so occupied with perishable things. We spend precious time on houses and clothes and food and physical comforts. Clothes wear out, and houses fall down, and food is consumed and forgotten. The body which we care for and adorn and make comfortable, dies and goes back to dust. We neglect our souls. They go unfed and uncared for. We are not concerned about them. Yet, they are the only part of us which lives forever.

The Lord Jesus Christ condemned such an attitude when He commanded those who follow Him to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and He promised them that all these needful things should be added unto them. He emphasized the stupidity of spending a lifetime in the pursuit of wealth and the accumulation of earthly possessions at the sacrifice of more important things when He asked, **“What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”** (Mark 8:36).

There are men who think themselves too clever to sell any piece of property without realizing a profit on their investment, but who see a very poor price on their souls. One night of pleasure, one word of approval from godless men, is the pittance for which they sell the immortal part of themselves.

There are women who spend hours every week and more money than they can afford on clothes and beauty treatments who never have a moment for the study of God's Word and the contemplation of His love with which to increase the soul's beauty. While they hang in their closets more dresses than they need, they neglect to provide for themselves a robe of righteousness.

The body goes to dust but the soul lives forever.

The residences which men build for themselves on the earth grow old and deteriorate in value. Fire consumes them; age destroys them. Death comes and takes away the ones who dwell in them. Infinitely more important is a **“building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”** (II Corinthians 5:1).

How much happier we would be if, viewing our lives in the light of eternity, we would obey the Word of the Lord, **“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”** (Matthew 6:19, 20).

O Morning Star! how fair and bright  
Thou beamest forth in truth and light,  
O Sovereign meek and lowly!  
Thou Root of Jesse, David's Son,  
My Lord and Bridegroom, Thou hast won  
My heart to serve Thee solely!  
Jesus! Jesus  
Fair and glorious, all victorious,  
Rich in blessing,  
Rule and might o'er all possessing!

Thou heavenly Brightness! Light divine!  
O deep within my heart now shine,  
And make Thee there an altar!  
Fill me with joy and strength to be  
Thy member, ever joined to Thee,  
In love that cannot falter;  
Jesus! Jesus  
Doth possess me; turn and bless me;  
Here in sadness  
Eye and heart long for Thy gladness!

— Philipp Nicolai

## ISOLATIONIST

MAN is not self-sufficient. Some men like to think they are, but no one can find in himself the answer to his own hunger of heart and longing of soul. The man who is self-reliant in the sense that he relies solely upon his own skill and strength and power leans upon a weak support, however clever and brilliant he may be. The man who seeks to satisfy the craving of his heart with things finds the hunger still unappeased. Money, land, stocks and bonds cannot meet man's deepest needs. Books, pictures, music—these are not sufficient. Even the man who relies upon friends for the satisfaction of the desire of his soul for companionship and for understanding to meet the problems and sorrows of life finds them insufficient.



The psalmist has expressed the need of men's hearts in the words, "**My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God**" (Psalm 42:2). The soul is immortal and only the immortal God can quench its thirst. Jesus Christ spoke about a rich man who said to his soul, "**Soul, thou hast much goods laid UP for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry**" (Luke 12:19). His barns were full of produce; his crops had been good. He had made his fortune, but he was a fool to attempt to satisfy his soul with those things. The human soul cannot slake its thirst at the wells of the world.

Man can come into a soul-satisfying acquaintance with God only through the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God manifest in the flesh. "**He that hath seen me hath seen the Father**" (John 14:9), said Jesus Christ. Christ is God revealed and manifest to meet the needs of men. Jesus said of Himself, "**Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life**" (John 4:14). The human heart pants after God as the hart panteth after the water brooks (Psalm 42:1). God's invitation to man is, "**Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely**" (Revelation 22:17).

As pants the hart for cooling streams  
When heated in the chase,  
So longs my soul, O God, for Thee  
And Thy refreshing grace.

For Thee, my God, the living God,  
My thirsty soul doth pine;  
O when shall I behold Thy face,  
Thou Majesty divine!

Why restless, why cast down, my soul?  
Trust God; and He'll employ  
His aid for thee, and change these sighs  
To thankful hymns of joy.

Why restless, why cast down, my soul?  
Hope still; and thou shalt sing  
The praise of Him who is thy God,  
Thy Saviour and thy King.

—Psalm 42 in rhyme

## ACTIONS SPEAK

JOHN the Baptist, that remarkable man, was thrown into prison by Herod because of his faithful preaching and courageous denunciation of sin. To him in the darkness of the dungeon came various reports about Christ.

And John who had pointed to Jesus and cried with such certainty, “**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,**” confused and perplexed and discouraged, now sent to Him from jail, asking, “**Art thou he that should come?**”

The answer of the Lord Jesus Christ was divinely positive. He did not insist loudly that indeed He was the Messiah nor send a message of rebuke to John because he had presumed to doubt His deity. He answered the question with no declaration of His own Messiahship at all. He said simply, “**Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see**” (Matthew 11:4).

John’s messengers had had an opportunity to observe the miraculous and divine power of Christ. They had been present as He gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, cleansed lepers, unstopped deaf ears, raised the dead, and preached the Gospel to the poor. What better answer could Christ have given to John’s question than the answer of His life and work? Every act of the Lord Jesus proclaimed His deity.

The outward action of a man’s life is the best indication of what he really is. The Lord stressed this truth. “**Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them**” (Matthew 7:17-20).

A man is bound to manifest outwardly by his words and his actions what he is in his heart, for out of the heart are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23), and as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he (Proverbs 23:7).

Some men say, “It does not matter what my creed is so long as I live right.” The truth is that no man who has a bad creed can be a good man. That which a man believes in his heart affects the course of his outward life. James says, “**Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works**” (James 2:18). The only way the heart of a man is apparent to others is by the works of his life.

When the saving grace of God transforms the heart of a man it transforms his life.

Men may scoff at the grace of God and profess to doubt the miracle of the new birth, but skeptics have no answer to the proof of God’s power and the evidence of the new birth when it is manifest in a transformed, godly life.

Christian, rise, and act thy creed,  
Let thy prayer be in thy deed;  
Seek the right, perform the true,  
Raise thy work and life anew.

Hearts around thee sink with care;  
Thou canst help their load to bear,  
Thou canst bring inspiring light,  
Arm their faltering wills to fight.

Let thine alms be hope and joy,  
And thy worship God's employ;  
Give Him thanks in humble zeal,  
Learning all His will to feel.

Come then, Law divine, and reign,  
Freest faith assailed in vain,  
Perfect love bereft of fear,  
Born in heaven and radiant here.

— F. A. Rollo Russell

### THE PROOF OF THE PUDDING

THIS is the day of the so-called “scientific” mind, the generation of those who must have proof before they will accept a truth. How often do we hear someone say, “I cannot take anything on faith. You have to prove something to me before I believe it.” With these words some people explain their refusal to accept the salvation which God offers, since this salvation is by faith.

As a matter of fact, even in the realm of science faith goes before proof. The scientist believes—that is, he has faith — that certain chemicals mixed together will produce certain results. Therefore, in the laboratory he mixes the chemicals to prove by experiment whether the thing he believes is true. A physician has faith that a certain drug has power to cure a disease and because he believes the drug has power he tries the drug in the treatment of the disease.

God asks us to apply this same sort of faith in the realm of the spiritual. His invitation is, “**O taste and see that the Lord is good**” (Psalm 34:8). All God asks is that we try Him. Such a challenge from the God of the universe to the race which He created should appeal to the “scientific” mind.

When one scientist has definitely demonstrated that a certain fact is scientifically true, other scientists accept his proof and go on from there in their research without having to reprove the truth which he has established.

It is not necessary to establish proof of the fact that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ can change men's hearts and give them new natures. This eternal truth has been proved in the lives of countless thousands. In any other field than the spiritual, the “scientific” mind would accept such overwhelming evidence without a moment's hesitation. Yet in the realm of the spiritual, men not only decline to believe that which has been proved thousands of times by others but they also refuse to make the experiment themselves.

“**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved**” (Acts 16:31), says the Bible, but the “modern, wise, and scientific” mind says, “You will have to prove that to me.” The proof lies in believing. When we believe we prove.

Art thou weary, art thou languid,  
Art thou sore distressed?  
“Come to Me,” saith One, “and coming,  
Be at rest.”

Hath He marks to lead me to Him,  
If He be my guide?  
“In His feet and hands are wound-prints,  
And His side.”

Is there diadem, as Monarch,  
That His brow adorns?  
“Yea, a crown, in very surety,  
But of thorns.”

If I find Him, if I follow,  
What His guerdon here?  
“Many a sorrow, many a labor,  
Many a tear.”

If I still hold closely to Him,  
What hath He at last?  
“Sorrow vanquished, labor ended,  
Jordan passed.”

If I ask Him to receive me,  
Will He say me nay?  
“Not till earth and not till heaven  
Pass away.”

Finding, following, keeping, struggling,  
Is He sure to bless?  
Saint, apostle, prophets, martyrs,  
Answer, “Yes!”

— Stephen the Sabaite

## **DREAMING**

JOSEPH was a dreamer. There is nothing wrong with dreaming the right sort of dreams if dreams do not become the whole end of life.

Of course, Joseph’s dreams were prophetic. They were sent to him by God as a promise of what he should become. He dreamed that the sun and the moon, representing his father and mother, and eleven stars, representing his brothers, bowed down to his star.

He dreamed that he and his family were gathering grain in the field together and that the sheaves of his mother and father and brethren bowed down to his sheaf. It is interesting and significant that these prophetic indications of the glory that lay ahead of Joseph should have shaped themselves into dreams about such simple things — stars and sheaves of grain. These were the things with which Joseph was familiar and with which he lived. Through the clear Eastern night, as he sat outside his father's tent or kept watch with his brothers over his father's flocks, he became familiar with the moon and stars. Up before day, he had often watched the sunrise. His life was largely occupied with the planting, the cultivation, and the harvesting of crops.

Men's dreams are an indication of their interest and a key to their lives. The things upon which your thoughts dwell indicate what you are. The ambitions which you set for yourself measure the quality of your character. The desires of the heart shape the course of the life. The man who thinks evil thoughts and dreams evil dreams will bring forth a crop of evil deeds.

No wonder, then, that the Word of God admonishes, **"Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"** (Philippians 4:8).

The man with an impure heart cannot live a pure life. The man whose impulses and desires are sinful will lead a sinful life, but through grace he may receive a cleansing of heart, for the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin (I John 1:7).

Go, dreamer, seek thy dream,  
And having found it, hold;  
The word has need of dreams  
That are not weighed in gold.

Dream high! — and having dreamed,  
To thine own dream be true;  
Count not the cost, for dreams are things  
Worth many a cup of rue.

So dream that when the night come  
Unto thy brief of days,  
A dream goes singing down the winds  
Of everlasting ways.

— Florence Wilson Roper

## PERSPECTIVE

Two men looking on the same scene behold entirely different things. The story goes that two travelers stood together on a mountain peak looking down into the valley just as the first rays of the sun fired the clouds above which they were standing.

One man exclaimed at the beauty of the scene. The other said, “This is the first time I ever looked down on a buzzard that was flying.” One man was enraptured with the beauty of the dawn. The other man saw a buzzard.

What we are influences what we see. That which occupies our mind shapes our outlook. Looking at a magnificent public building, the architect looks for details of size and proportion and architectural style. The landscape artist notices the shrubbery set against the building. The housekeeper is conscious of the fact that the steps are dirty.

The prophet and his servant were surrounded by their enemies. The servant saw the horses and chariots and the soldiers that had come to take them prisoners. The prophet saw God’s horses and chariots and heavenly soldiers. The servant of the prophet was frightened by what he saw. The prophet’s vision made him bold and confident, and he prayed for his servant, saying, **“Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see”** (II Kings 6:17). The Lord heard the prayer and the servant was given the spiritual vision of the prophet.

Jesus said, **“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God”** (Matthew 5:8). Only the man whose heart is pure can see God. The man whose heart is sinful and impure is blind to the presence of God. His sight is so filled with that which is ugly and debased that he has no time to catch a glimpse of the pure and holy. The man who is occupied solely with the temporal and physical cannot be expected to see the spiritual and eternal. **“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”** (I Corinthians 2:14).

Blessed are the eyes that see  
The things that you have seen,  
Blessed are the feet that walk  
The ways where you have been.

Blessed are the eyes that see  
The agony of God,  
Blessed are the feet that tread  
The paths His feet have trod.

Blessed are the souls that solve  
The paradox of pain,  
And find the path that, piercing it,  
Leads through to peace again.

— G. A. Studdert Kennedy

## CHRISTENDOM AND CHRISTIANITY

COLUMNISTS and commentators complain that our “Christian civilization” has apparently failed because we have not established equity and brotherhood, justice and peace upon the earth.

Our Western civilization, they declare, has in theory committed itself to the principles set forth in the teachings of Christ, but in fact it has not attained them.

These men have overlooked, as have many other people in these last few years, the fact that there is a difference between Christendom and Christianity, between having accepted the teachings of Christ as the proper basis for ideal human relationships and having become a Christian.

Thoughtful and benevolent men are compelled to recognize in the truths which Christ taught, in the example which He set, and in the instruction which He gave to His disciples, the noblest conception and the finest pattern of life. But the mental acceptance of these things does not make a man a Christian. Nor does the fact that a nation recognizes in its constitution some of the truths which Christ taught make that nation a Christian nation, nor does it establish His kingdom upon the earth. Christ Himself taught definitely that to become a Christian one must be born again (John I 3:3).

We do not grow into the kingdom of our Lord. We are born into it by simple trusting faith in Christ and by acceptance of Him as personal Saviour and as Lord of our lives. We do not become Christians when we accept the truth of His teachings. We become Christians when we accept Him, who is the Truth.

We do not hear much preaching these days on the new birth. There is a great need for it. “**Ye must be born again**” (John 3:7), says Christ, and until a man is born again he has no right to call himself a Christian, however much intellectual assent he may give to the truth of Christ’s teachings.

As for attaining a state of absolute equity and justice and final peace upon the earth, that is something we shall never experience until the Prince of Peace Himself comes to reign over the earth. Then the kingdoms of this world will become in reality the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ (Revelation 11:15).

The King shall come when morning dawns,  
And light triumphant breaks;  
When beauty gilds the eastern hills,  
And life to joy awakes.

Not as of old a little child  
To bear, and fight, and die,  
But crowned with glory like the sun  
That lights the morning sky.

O brighter than the rising morn  
When He, victorious, rose,  
And left the lonesome place of death,  
Despite the rage of foes—

O brighter than the glorious morn  
Shall this fair morning be,  
When Christ, our King, in beauty comes,  
And we His face shall see!

The King shall come when morning dawns,  
And light and beauty brings:  
Hail, Christ, the Lord! Thy people pray,  
“Come quickly, King of kings.”

—Greek Hymn

## FAITH AT REST

SOME people believe Christ. Some believe on Him. When Jesus was here on earth some believed that He was the Messiah. They took Him at His word. Their belief was strengthened by the evidence of the miracles He performed and by the life He lived. They believed Him. But, when He talked about sacrifice and suffering and hardship, they turned back from following Him. They believed Him, but they did not trust their lives to Him nor risk their future to His leadership.

Some people today believe Him to the extent that they accept the words which He spoke as truth. They believe He is the Son of God. They do not doubt His deity. They give intellectual assent to His truth, but they do not commit their lives to Him nor prove that they believe Him by obedience and surrender to His will.

Believing on Jesus is another matter altogether than believing Him.

- To believe on Jesus means to trust Him completely, not only to accept what He said as truth, but also to believe Him enough to commit oneself eternally to His keeping.
- To believe on Him is to make Him, who is the **“sure foundation,”** the foundation on which our lives are built, the center about which the acts and thoughts and ambitions and desires of our lives are gathered.
- To believe on Jesus means to cling to Him as the support and stay of life.
- To believe on Jesus means that we, conscious of our own weakness, rely on Him and depend upon His truth and power.
- To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ means to depend upon Him as a man escaping from a burning building depends upon the ladder which he descends.

It is to depend upon Him as the pilot of a plane “flying blind” depends upon his instruments and the radio beam.

**“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”** (Acts 16:31). It is not enough simply to believe Him. We must in faith trust ourselves to Him, must believe on Him.



Approach, my soul, the mercy seat,  
Where Jesus answers prayer;  
There humbly fall before His feet,  
For none can perish there.

Thy promise is my only plea,  
With this I venture nigh;  
Thou callest burdened souls to Thee,  
And such, O Lord, am I.

Bowed down beneath a load of sin,  
By Satan sorely pressed,  
By wars without and fears within,  
I come to Thee for rest.

Be Thou my shield and hiding place,  
That, sheltered near Thy side,  
I may my fierce accuser face,  
And tell him Thou hast died.

O wondrous Love! To bleed and die,  
To bear the cross and shame,  
That guilty sinners, such as I,  
Might plead Thy gracious Name!

“Poor tempest-tossed soul, be still;  
My promised grace receive”:  
‘Tis Jesus speaks—I must, I will,  
I can, I do believe.

— John Newton

## **BLINDNESS—GOOD AND BAD**

THERE are two kinds of blindness referred to in the forty-second chapter of Isaiah. One is the sort of blindness which the Lord came to heal (verse 7). The other is a blindness which the Lord looks upon and finds well pleasing to Him (verse 19).

The first is a guilty blindness; the second is a God-honoring blindness.

There are some men who are spiritually blind. They are blind to their true condition. They do not comprehend the fact that they are sinners and need a Saviour. Their eyes have been blinded by the god of this world so that they do not realize that it is impossible for man in his own righteousness to please God. Instead of seeing their need of the righteousness of Christ they go about to establish their own righteousness (II Corinthians 4:4). They are blind to spiritual truth.

When Christ comes into life He gives sight. Spiritual darkness and night turn to day. Just as He opened the physical eyes of the blind man beside the road, so He gives spiritual sight to those who cry out to Him. He is the Light of the World, and He floods the life with light.

There is the other sort of blindness. It is blindness to the appeal and attraction of the world.

Some men and women have caught a vision of the face of Christ—a vision so bright that their eyes have been blind to the lights of earth ever since.

- Their gaze is not fixed upon earthly things.
- Their glances are not trapped by the display of earth.
- Their eyes do not feast upon the tinsel of time.
- Their affection is fixed upon things above.

The lust of the eye which is not of the Father but of the world (I John 2:16) has no power over them.

Their eyes are blind to fleeting, temporal sights. The man who looks long at the sun and then turns his eyes toward a candle flame cannot see it. The Christian whose gaze lingers upon the Light of the World becomes blind to the dim candles of a sinful age.

Walk in the light! So shaft thou know  
That fellowship of love  
His Spirit only can bestow  
Who reigns in light above.

Walk in the light! And thou shalt find  
Thy heart made truly His  
Who dwells in cloudless light enshrined,  
In whom no darkness is.

Walk in the light! And thou shalt own  
Thy darkness passed away,  
Because that light hath on thee shone  
In which is perfect day.

Walk in the light! And e'en the tomb  
No fearful shade shall wear;  
Glory shall chase away its gloom,  
For Christ hath conquered there.

Walk in the light! Thy path shall be  
A path, though thorny, bright:  
For God, by grace, shall dwell in thee,  
And God Himself is Light.

— Bernard Barton

## TOMBSTONES

JESUS CHRIST, SO kind to sinners and so tender in dealing with human weakness, lashed out in vigorous language of stern reproach against the Pharisees: **“Ye are like unto whited sepulchres . . . full of dead men’s bones”** (Matthew 23:27).

Judged by one standard they were very righteous, but their standard was their own standard, and their righteousness was self-righteousness. They were careful about their outward observance of all the laws and ceremonies. They were careful to observe fasts and often prayed—in public—but all their righteousness was outward. Their religion was a religion of “don’ts” and “do’s.” It was all on the surface.

They vigorously contended for the faith and took pride in its championship, but in their own hearts was no spiritual life. Their souls were corrupt and full of rottenness; their religion was a shell. Without spirituality their religion was not inward life but a garment of practice, clothing the outward man.

The Pharisees are still with us. They were not peculiar to Israel. Christianity today — even the most conservative orthodox Christianity — is blighted by some who have inherited the worst traits of Israel’s self-righteous sect. They are proud of their peculiarities and thankful they are not like other men. They have a head knowledge of the Gospel and an outward practice of its righteousness in which they take great pride. Inwardly there is none of the abundant life of Christ, none of His passion for lost men, none of His love for sinners. They judge other men and women on the basis of the standards which they themselves have set up and their judgments are harsh and cruel and un-Christlike.

The man who is born of God will manifest in his outward actions, in his daily life, the indwelling life which he possesses, and his whole life will be warm and sweet. The outward practice will be right because the inward man is right, and through every relationship of his life will shine the light and warmth of God’s Spirit which dwells within his heart. There will be none of the coldness and hardness and self-righteousness of the Pharisee. There will be in his life none of the coldness of marble monuments covering the corruption and death in the Pharisee’s heart.

Is there ambition in my heart?  
Search, gracious God, and see;  
Or do I act a haughty part? Lord,  
I appeal to Thee.

I charge my thoughts, be humble still,  
And all my carriage mild,  
Content, my Father, with Thy will,  
And quiet as a child.

The patient soul, the lowly mind  
Shall have a large reward:  
Let saints in sorrow lie resign'd,  
And trust a faithful Lord.

— Isaac Watts

## A PRICE TO PAY

IT IS always wise to ask oneself, “To what results will this course of action lead me?”

A consideration of the consequences rarely precedes the deed which ultimately produces a tragedy. One who considers the inevitable results of sin will pause before rushing headlong to his destruction.

- Playing with fire, the boy does not behold in advance the charred and smoking ruins which will result from his carelessness.
- Taking his first drink, the youth does not see in the glass the reflection of the red-eyed drunkard he will become.
- Juggling his expense account or misappropriating a few dollars, the young businessman fails to consider the humiliation and tragedy looming ahead on the road of dishonesty as it leads him toward gray prison walls.

This is an important question, “What effect will this act have on me today?” but definitely more important is the question, “What will be the final result of this act?”

In the time of the Prophet Jeremiah the nation of Judah had almost completely forgotten God. Enamored of the idolatry of neighboring countries, nobility and common people alike had become corrupt and wicked. Moral conditions were growing worse all the time. But, in those days, as always, God had a faithful few who did not follow the popular trend.

Jeremiah was one of these. Alarmed by the blindness of the people to the impending national destruction, crying out against the popular sins of his day, he sought to warn them of the results of their course of life.

Watching the people listen gladly to false prophets who promised peace and prosperity and blessing, Jeremiah asked them this question: “What will ye do in the end?” He lived to see the answer to his own question. In the end their city was destroyed. In the end they were slain or taken captive.

Sin always brings destruction in its wake. You may seem to get by with the violation of God’s law today, but the **“wages of sin is death.”** You may hide your sin from others now, but what will you do in the end when you come to stand in the presence of God, from whom nothing is hid?

The day of wrath, that dreadful day,  
When heaven and earth shall pass away!  
What power shall be the sinner's stay?  
How shall he meet that dreadful day?

When, shriveling like a parched scroll,  
The flaming heavens together roll;  
And louder yet, and yet more dread,  
Swells the high trump that wakes the dead.

O on that day, that wrathful day,  
When man to judgment wakes from clay,  
Be Thou, O Christ, the sinner's stay,  
Though heaven and earth shall pass away!

— Walter Scott

## TWO THRONES

THE picture in the book of Revelation of men standing before a great white throne being judged for the deeds done in the body is dramatic and terrifying. Men and women are crying for the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him who sits upon the throne. Those who rejected the grace of God and refused His salvation are gathered, small and great, before His judgment seat.

The Bible speaks of another throne. It is called “**the throne of grace**” (Hebrews 4:16). They who approach this throne now will never have to stand before the other throne— the throne of judgment. The judgment throne is to be set up in the future. The throne of grace is now established.

Men will come before the judgment throne full of fear. Men approach the throne of grace with confidence. “**Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need,**” said Paul. This throne of grace is a place of blessing—“**the mercy seat**”—and there is a reason for the boldness with which we may approach it.

The sinner needs salvation. He can boldly plead the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That blood sprinkles the mercy seat. The blood was shed for his sin. God promises forgiveness of sin to all who trust in Christ. “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved**” (Acts 16:31). A sinner may rely boldly upon the promise of! God and at the throne of grace obtain forgiveness of his sin.

Here He will restore to fellowship the Christian who has been unfaithful and fallen into temptation. “**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**” (I John 1:9), and here we find power and victory in the time of temptation, grace to help in time of need.

Sweet is Thy mercy, Lord;  
Before Thy mercy seat.  
My soul, adoring, pleads Thy word,  
And owns Thy mercy sweet.

My need and Thy desires  
Are all in Christ complete;  
Thou hast the justice truth requires,  
And I Thy mercy sweet.

Where'er Thy Name is blest,  
Where'er Thy people meet,  
There I delight in Thee to rest,  
And find Thy mercy sweet.

Light Thou my weary way,  
Lead Thou my wandering feet,  
That while I stay on earth I may  
Still find Thy mercy sweet.

Thus shall the heavenly host  
Hear all my songs repeat  
To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
My joy, Thy mercy sweet.

—John S. B. Monsell

## **REJECTED DIAGNOSIS**

SOME people do not want to be told the truth. There is many a mother who does not want to be told the truth about her child. Her son is a neighborhood nuisance, a cheat, and a liar, but you could not get her to believe it. “He is a good little darling, and so badly misunderstood,” she will say.

There are some people who do not want the truth about their talents. I once knew a woman who thought she had great gifts as a singer and that she possessed a marvelous voice. She sang off key and her voice was most unpleasant, but no one—not even her vocal teacher—could make her believe it. She thought she was a great singer, and she would not listen to anyone who tried to tell her the truth about how bad a singer she was.

There are people who will not believe the truth about their physical condition. Their physicians recognize serious symptoms and warn them that they must take care of themselves, but they will not believe the doctors or follow their advice.

But there are infinitely more people who will not believe the truth about their spiritual condition.

Men do not like to admit that they are sinners or that they need a Saviour. Full of self-righteousness, they refuse to accept the truth of God's Word when it says, "**All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**" (Romans 3:23). They are quite satisfied with their own spiritual condition and do not welcome the diagnosis of Almighty God.

How sad that men prefer falsehood to fact, that they welcome wrong and reject right, that they turn from truth to error. How melancholy the condition of those who change the truth of God into a lie (Romans 1:25). The Lord Jesus came to the Jews proclaiming His deity, announcing His Messiahship. They rejected His claims and refused to accept Him. He told them the truth about Himself and the truth about themselves, and they did not believe either. "**Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not**" (John 8:45), He said.

When we recognize the truth of His deity, we must also acknowledge our own sinfulness. If He is as He claimed to be, the Truth, we must believe Him when He says, "**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**" (John 3:3).

Lord of all pow'r and might,  
Father of love and light,  
Speed on Thy Word:  
O let the Gospel sound  
All the wide world around,  
Wherever man is found;  
God speed His Word.

Lo, what embattled foes,  
Stern in their hate, oppose  
God's holy Word:  
One for His truth we stand,  
Strong in His own right hand,  
Firm as a martyr band;  
God shield His Word.

Onward shall be our course,  
Despite of fraud or force;  
God is before;  
His Word ere long shall run  
Free as the noonday sun;  
His purpose must be done;  
God bless His Word.

— Hugh Stowell

## THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR

THERE is no tragedy like the tragedy of a missed opportunity.

The world is filled with people who are failures because they failed to take advantage of an opportunity. There are men who had a chance to get an education, but who failed to avail themselves of it and who, therefore, have never been able to realize their full possibilities since their minds are untrained and their talents undeveloped. There are others who failed to grasp opportunities suddenly thrust upon them whereby they might have secured fortune and prominence. Shakespeare has this to say about opportunities:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Some men are more fortunate than others. They neglect the first opportunity, and they are given another. To some men opportunity after opportunity is offered and none are taken advantage of.

Saddest of all neglected opportunities is the opportunity of salvation. God gives a man an opportunity to prepare for eternity, and he neglects it. Sometimes in His divine mercy innumerable opportunities are offered, but there comes a time when the last opportunity slips by and a soul goes into eternity unprepared and without hope.

“When asked to trust Christ as their Saviour some say, “Not today; another time.” They squander this opportunity and impose on God for another. The Word of God says, “**Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation**” (II Corinthians 6:2). There is now an opportunity. Tomorrow there may not be one. Life is uncertain and God’s opportunities are fleet of wing. The wise man seizes the present opportunities.

The bodies of some of the men who lost their lives in the attack of the Japanese upon Pearl Harbor were recovered from the sunken vessels.

One of the Red Cross nurses helping to prepare the bodies for burial came upon the corpse of her own brother. In his hand was clasped his New Testament. In the back was printed, “I accept the Lord Jesus as my own personal Saviour,” and in the blank provided underneath, the young man had signed his name.

The nurse took the Testament and underneath his name she wrote her own, signifying that she had accepted her dead brother’s Christ, thankful that he had seized his opportunity to prepare for eternity, and determined not to miss hers.

Lo! on a narrow neck of land,  
‘Twixt two unbounded seas, I stand,  
Secure, insensible:  
A point of time, a moment’s space,  
Removes me to that heavenly place,  
Or shuts me up in hell.



O God, mine inmost soul convert,  
And deeply in my thoughtful heart  
Eternal things impress:  
Give me to feel their solemn weight,  
And tremble on the brink of fate,  
And wake to righteousness.

Be this my one great business here,  
With serious industry and fear  
Eternal bliss to insure;  
Thine utmost counsel to fulfill,  
And suffer all Thy righteous will,  
And to the end endure.

Then, Saviour, then my soul receive,  
Transported from this vale, to live  
And reign with Thee above,  
Where faith is sweetly lost in sight,  
And hope in full, supreme delight,  
And everlasting love.

— Charles Wesley

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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