

Teaching Notes (Unedited)

These notes are provided as a rough draft. It is our hope that they will aid you in your own personal edification and be helpful in preparation for leading a group bible study.

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Purpose of The Enthroned Life

We must press on to maturity. We must attain to the 'measure of the fullness of Christ,' and not remain in God's kindergarten indefinitely. If we grow into manhood in the spiritual life we shall not escape conflict. As long as Ephesians 6:10-18 remains in the Bible, we must be prepared for serious warfare - "And having done all, to stand."

J.O Fraser

Week 7 of 11

Purpose of the Enthroned Life

Let me spring us into our discussion time this evening by quoting again from A.W. Pink where He makes comment on the word “*consider*” as it pertains to Hebrews 3:1:

“Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus...the Apostle and High Priest of our confession...”

“To ‘*consider*’ Christ as here enjoined, means to thoroughly ponder who and what He is; to attentively weigh His dignity, His excellency, His authority; to think of what is due to Him. It is failure to thoroughly weigh important considerations which causes us to let them “slip.” (Hebrew 2:1) On the other hand, it is by diligently pondering things of moment and value that the understanding is enabled to better apprehend them, the memory to retain them, the heart to be impressed, and the individual to make a better use of them. To ‘*consider*’ Christ means to behold Him, not simply by a passing glance or giving to Him an occasional thought, but by the heart being fully occupied with Him. “Set Me as a seal upon thine heart” (Song of Sol 8:6), is His call to us. And it is our failure at this point which explains why we know so little about Him, why we love Him so feebly, why we trust Him so imperfectly.”

My questions for us this evening are:

1. Why are we not *considering* Jesus more?
2. What effect does that neglect have on our walk?
3. What are some of the reasons for us not giving the time to *consider* Him?
4. And, where are we going if not to Him?

Now let me close by reminding us that people who have been Christians a long time are not always strong Christians. Some remain weak in faith throughout their lives. And new Christians are not necessarily weak Christians. They may be uninformed Christians for a while, but they do not have to be weak.

Being strong in the Lord has nothing to do with how long we have been saved. Our strength is derived from God, not from ourselves. Therefore, it does not depend upon how long we have been saved, but how much time we have spent *considering* Jesus!

We are to be strong in the power of His might. Christ makes His power available to us now! (Ephesians 1:19) It is our responsibility to avail ourselves to it! When we read in Ephesians 6 that we are to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, the word ‘*power*’ in that verse is the word *kratos* which means:

- Dominion
- Strength
- Manifested power

The word especially signifies extended strength, power shown effectively in a reigning authority. *Kratos* primarily refers to God's kingdom authority, dominion, and majesty. His power is released through us **as** we exercise the authority He has given us! As Head over all things, He has been given to the church for her benefit - for her special advantage! (Ephesians 1:22) We as a church are to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. We are called to **exercise** the authority that we have in Christ so that His omnipotent ruling power can be manifested in *and* through us! (Luke 10:19) We are to go in His Name! And His name is Jesus! We are to step into *and* exercise our position as ambassadors - ambassadors of the Kings of kings, representing the throne of heaven here on earth.

But do we know it? Are we conscious of it?

Rockstad says in his book, The Armor of God,

“When even one child of God is rendered spiritually ineffective, the other members of the body of Christ will suffer. (I Corinthians 12:26) On the other hand, every believer who by faith maintains his position of abiding in Christ being seated with Him in the heavenlies elevates the entire body of Christ.”

Let's continue to learn how by faith to maintain our position in the third heaven - displaying to both the visible and the invisible realms -

That Jesus Christ is King

and

That our God reigns!

Before we open up time for individual prayer, let's stand together and worship together as we listen to “[Speak to the Nations](#).”

For Further Reflection:

THE SOLITARINESS OF GOD

From The Attributes of God
by Arthur W. Pink

THE DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE

from The Knowledge of the Holy
By A. W. Tozer

The Solitariness of God

From The Attributes of God

by Arthur W. Pink

The title of this article is perhaps not sufficiently explicit to indicate its theme. This is partly due to the fact that so few today are accustomed to meditate upon the personal perfections of God. Comparatively few of those who occasionally read the Bible are aware of the awe-inspiring and worship-provoking grandeur of the Divine character. That God is great in wisdom, wondrous in power, yet full of mercy, is assumed by many to be almost common knowledge; but, to entertain anything approaching an adequate conception of His being, His nature, His attributes, as these are revealed in Holy Scripture, is something which very, very few people in these degenerate times have attained unto. God is solitary in His excellency. "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11).

"In the beginning, God" (Gen. 1:1). There was a time, if "time" is could be called, when God, in the unity of His nature (though subsisting equally in three Divine Persons), dwelt all alone. "In the beginning, God." There was no heaven, where His glory is now particularly manifested. There was no earth to engage His attention. There were no angels to hymn His praises; no universe to be upheld by the word of His power. There was nothing, no one, but God; and that, not for a day, a year, or an age, but "from everlasting." During a past eternity, God was alone: self-contained, self-sufficient, self-satisfied; in need of nothing. Had a universe, had angels, had human beings been necessary to Him in any way, they also had been called into existence from all eternity. The creating of them when He did, added nothing to God essentially. He changes not (Mal. 3:6); therefore His essential glory can be neither augmented nor diminished.

God was under no constraint, no obligation, no necessity to create. That He chose to do so was purely a sovereign act on His part, caused by nothing outside Himself, determined by nothing but His own mere good pleasure; for He "worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). That He did create was simply for His manifestative glory. Do some of our readers imagine that we have gone beyond what Scripture warrants? Then our appeal shall be to the Law and the Testimony: "Stand up and bless the Lord your God forever and ever: and blessed be Thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise" (Neh. 9:5). God is no gainer even from our worship. He was in no need of that external glory of His grace which arises from His redeemed, for He is glorious enough in Himself without that. What was it moved Him to predestinate His elect to the praise of the glory of His grace? It was, as Ephesians 1:5 tells us, according to the good pleasure of His will.

We are well aware that the high ground we are here treading is new and strange to almost all of our readers; for that reason it is well to move slowly. Let our appeal again be to the Scriptures. At the end of Romans 11, where the apostle brings to a close his long argument on salvation by pure and sovereign grace, he asks, "For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again?" (vv. 34, 35). The force of this is, it is impossible to bring the Almighty under obligations to the creature; God gains nothing from us. If thou be righteous, what givest thou Him? Or what receiveth He of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; and thy righteousness may profit the son of man (Job 35:7, 8), but it certainly cannot affect God, who is all-blessed in Himself. When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10)—our obedience has profited God nothing.

Nay, we go further: our Lord Jesus Christ added nothing to God in His essential being and glory, either by what He did or suffered. True, blessedly and gloriously true, He manifested the glory of God to us, but He added nought to God. He Himself expressly declares so, and there is no appeal from His words: "My goodness extendeth not to Thee" (Ps. 16:2). The whole of that Psalm is a Psalm of Christ. Christ's goodness or righteousness reached unto His saints in the earth (Psa. 16:3), but God was high above and beyond it all, God only is the "Blessed One" (Mark 14:61, Gr.).

It is perfectly true that God is both honored and dishonored by men; not in His essential being, but in His official character. It is equally true that God has been "glorified" by creation, by providence, and by redemption. This we do not and dare not dispute for a moment. But all of this has to do with His manifestative glory and the recognition of it by us. Yet had God so pleased He might have continued alone for all eternity, without making known His glory unto creatures. Whether He should do so or not was determined solely by His own will. He was perfectly blessed in Himself before the first creature was called into being. And what are all the creatures of His hands unto Him even now? Let Scripture again make answer: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering. All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto Him?" (Isa. 40:15-18). That is the God of Scripture; alas, He is still "the unknown God" (Acts 17:23) to the heedless multitudes. "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in: that bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity" (Isa. 40:22,23). How vastly different is the God of Scripture from the god of the average pulpit!

Nor is the testimony of the New Testament any different from that of the Old: how could it be, seeing that both have one and the same Author! There too we read, "Which in His times He shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords: Who only bath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting, Amen" (1 Tim. 6:16). Such an One is to be revered, worshipped, adored. He is solitary in His majesty, unique in His excellency, peerless in His perfections. He sustains all, but is Himself independent of all. He gives to all, but is enriched by none.

Such a God cannot be found out by searching; He can be known, only as He is revealed to the heart by the Holy Spirit through the Word. It is true that creation demonstrates a Creator, and that, so plainly, men are "without excuse;" yet, we still have to say with Job, "Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand?" (26:14). The so-called argument from design by well-meaning "Apologists" has, we believe, done much more harm than good, for it has attempted to bring down the great God to the level of finite comprehension, and thereby has lost sight of His solitary excellence.

Analogy has been drawn between a savage finding a watch upon the sands, and from a close examination of it he infers a watch-maker. So far so good. But attempt to go further: suppose that savage sits down on the sand and endeavors to form to himself a conception of this watch-maker, his personal affections and manners; his disposition, acquirements, and moral character—all that goes to make up a personality; could he ever think or reason out a real man—the man who made the watch, so that he could say, "I am acquainted with him?" It seems trifling to ask such questions, but is the eternal and infinite God so much more within the grasp of human reason?

No, indeed! The God of Scripture can only be known by those to whom He makes Himself known.

Nor is God known by the intellect. "God is Spirit" (John 4:24), and therefore can only be known spiritually. But fallen man is not spiritual, he is carnal. He is dead to all that is spiritual. Unless he is born again supernaturally brought from death unto life, miraculously translated out of darkness into light, he cannot even see the things of God (John 3:3), still less apprehend them (1 Cor. 2:14). The Holy Spirit has to shine in our hearts (not intellects) in order to give us "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). And even that spiritual knowledge is but fragmentary. The regenerated soul has to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 3:18).

The principal prayer and aim of Christians should be that we "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).

The Divine Transcendence
from The Knowledge of the Holy
By A. W. Tozer

O Lord our Lord, there is none like Thee in heaven above or in the earth beneath. Thine is the greatness and the dignity and the majesty. All that is in the heaven and the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, O God, and Thou art exalted as head over all. Amen.

When we speak of God as transcendent we mean of course that He is exalted far above the created universe, so far above that human thought cannot imagine it. To think accurately about this, however, we must keep in mind that “far above” does not here refer to physical distance from the earth but to quality of being. We are concerned not with location in space nor with mere altitude, but with life. God is spirit, and to Him magnitude and distance have no meaning. To us they are useful as analogies and illustrations, so God refers to them constantly when speaking down to our limited understanding. The words of God as found in Isaiah, “Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity,” give a distinct impression of altitude, but that is because we who dwell in a world of matter, space, and time tend to think in material terms and can grasp abstract ideas only when they are identified in some way with material things. In its struggle to free itself from the tyranny of the natural world, the human heart must learn to translate upward the language the Spirit uses to instruct us.

It is spirit that gives significance to matter and apart from spirit nothing has any value at last. A little child strays from a party of sightseers and becomes lost on a mountain, and immediately the whole mental perspective of the members of the party is changed. Rapt admiration for the grandeur of nature gives way to acute distress for the lost child. The group spreads out over the mountainside anxiously calling the child’s name and searching eagerly into every secluded spot where the little one might chance to be hidden.

What brought about this sudden change? The tree-clad mountain is still there towering into the clouds in breath-taking beauty, but no one notices it now. All attention is focused upon the search for a curly-haired little girl not yet two years old and weighing less than thirty pounds. Though so new and so small, she is more precious to parents and friends than all the huge bulk of the vast and ancient mountain they had been admiring a few minutes before. And in their judgment the whole civilized world concurs, for the little girl can love and laugh and speak and pray, and the mountain cannot. It is the child’s quality of being that gives it worth.

Yet we must not compare the being of God with any other as we just now compared the mountain with the child. We must not think of God as highest in an ascending order of beings, starting with the single cell and going on up from the fish to the bird to the animal to man to angel to cherub to God. This would be to grant God eminence, even pre-eminence, but that is not enough; we must grant Him transcendence in the fullest meaning of that word.

Forever God stands apart, in light unapproachable. He is as high above an archangel as above a caterpillar, for the gulf that separates the archangel from the caterpillar is but finite, while the gulf between God and the archangel is infinite. The caterpillar and the archangel, though far removed from each other in the scale of created things, are nevertheless one in that they are alike created. They both belong in the category of that which-is-not-God and are separated from God by infinitude itself.

Reticence and compulsion forever contend within the heart that would speak of God. How shall polluted mortals dare to sing Thy glory or Thy grace? Beneath Thy feet we Lie afar,

And see but shadows of Thy face. Isaac Watts

Yet we console ourselves with the knowledge that it is God Him-self who puts it in our hearts to seek Him and makes it possible in some measure to know Him, and He is pleased with even the feeblest effort to make Him known.

If some watcher or holy one who has spent his glad centuries by the sea of fire were to come to earth, how meaningless to him would be the ceaseless chatter of the busy tribes of men. How strange to him and how empty would sound the, flat, stale and profitless words heard in the average pulpit from week to week.

And were such a one to speak on earth would he not speak of God? Would he not charm and fascinate his hearers with rapturous descriptions of the Godhead? And after hearing him could we ever again consent to listen to anything less than theology, the doctrine of God? Would we not thereafter demand of those who would presume to teach us that they speak to us from the mount of divine vision or remain silent altogether?

When the psalmist saw the transgression of the wicked his heart told him how it could be. "There is no fear of God before his eyes," he explained, and in so saying revealed to us the psychology of sin. When men no longer fear God, they transgress His laws without hesitation. The fear of consequences is not deterrent when the fear of God is gone.

In olden days men of faith were said to "walk in the fear of God" and to "serve the Lord with fear." However intimate their communion with God, however bold their prayers, at the base of their religious life was the conception of God as awesome and dreadful. This idea of God transcendent rims through the whole Bible and gives color and tone to the character of the saints. This fear of God was more than a natural apprehension of danger; it was a nonrational dread, an acute feeling of personal insufficiency in the presence of God the Almighty.

Wherever God appeared to men in Bible times the results were the same - an overwhelming sense of terror and dismay, a wrenching sensation of sinfulness and guilt. When God spoke, Abram stretched himself upon the ground to listen. When Moses saw the Lord in the burning bush, he hid his face in fear to look upon God. Isaiah's vision of God wrung from him the cry, "Woe is me!" and the confession, "I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips."

Daniel's encounter with God was probably the most dreadful and wonderful of them all. The prophet lifted up his eyes and saw One whose "body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." "I Daniel alone saw the vision" he afterwards wrote, "for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground."

These experiences show that a vision of the divine transcendence soon ends all controversy between the man and his God. The fight goes out of the man and he is ready with the conquered Saul to ask meekly,

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Conversely, the self-assurance of modern Christians, the basic levity present in so many of our religious gatherings, the shocking disrespect shown for the Person of God, are evidence enough of deep blindness of heart.

Many call themselves by the name of Christ, talk much about God, and pray to Him sometimes, but evidently do not know who He is. "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life," but this healing fear is today hardly found among Christian men.

Once in conversation with his friend Eckermann, the poet Goethe turned to thoughts of religion and spoke of the abuse of the divine name. "People treat it," he said, "as if that incomprehensible and most high Being, who is even beyond the reach of thought, were only their equal. Otherwise they would not say 'the Lord God, the dear God, the good God.' This expression becomes to them, especially to the clergy, who have it daily in their mouths, a mere phrase, a barren name, to which no thought whatever is attached. If they were impressed by His greatness they would be dumb, and through veneration unwilling to name Him.

*Lord of all being, Throned afar,
They glory flames from sun and star; Center and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!
Lord of all life, below, above,
Whose light is truth, whose warmth is love, Before Thy ever-blazing
Throne
We ask no luster of our own.
- Oliver Wendell Holmes*

[illegible]

Glory to The Father

This is the supreme truth of all, this is the highest glory, this is the most priceless thing that is true of us as God's people. We are 'seated together with Christ in the heavenly places' now; at this moment we are in that position.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Week 8 of 11

Glory to The Father

How many of you experienced the Lord's healing power last week? That's wonderful! He is so faithful to confirm His word! In Mark 16 He says to us, "...and these signs will follow those who believe..." and one of the signs in that passage is divine healing.

I want to take some time this evening to review the teaching on "The Enthroned Christian...Living Life in the Heavlies." I believe it will help solidify our faith and help us to position ourselves to receive this evening from the Lord as we call upon Him in prayer.

We began in Ephesians 1:1-3, didn't we?

¹Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:

²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

We discovered that the apostle takes us to great heights in this passage, doesn't he? He lifts us into the heavlies *and* shows us the Christian's position in its greatest glory and majesty in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

Now as you remember, the word used in Ephesians for '*heavenly places*' is derived from the word Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 12:2 where he talks about being lifted up into the third heaven...where God in a very special manner manifests His presence and His glory. It is also the place where the Lord Jesus Christ in His glorified body dwells.

As a new creation born from above we are joined to Christ and are partakers of His life...of His glorified life, resulting in being partakers of His resources as well. (Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 3:14) What a tremendous truth to lay a hold of! All of His resources are available to us, but are we availing ourselves to them? That is the question, isn't it?

We moved on to Ephesians 1:20-23 and came to understand that it was the Father who "*...raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*"

And it was the Father who "*...put all things under His feet and gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*"

Some of us for the first time discovered the truth that Jesus is Head over all things, and as such has been given to the church for her benefit - for her special advantage. Let me share from Gabelien to open up the depth of this passage for us:

“We might have expected the apostle to explain as elsewhere that as head over everything, Christ is head of His body, the company of believers. But that’s not how he puts it! Instead, he says that Christ in His exaltation over the universe is God’s gift to the church...is the Father’s gift to the church. He is “the head over every power and authority” (Colossians 2:10) and as such is bestowed on the church. There is given to the Church, and for the Church’s benefit, a head who is also head over all things. The Church has authority and power to overcome all opposition because her leader and head is Lord of all.”

Gaebelein continues,

“The church is described as Christ’s body. (Colossians 1:18) It is not only in symbol, but in fact...the church is not an institution but an organism. It exists and functions only by reason of its vital relationship with the risen Lord who is its Head deriving life and power from Him. The church is the body of Christ, and is further described as “the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way. The Church is filled with (and by) Christ and as His body, it manifests Him to the world, but it can only do so as He fills it with Himself. (Colossians 3:19) But! The Christ who fills the Church also fills the universe, so that the church is “the fullness of Him who fills the whole creation”.

Paraphrasing him now, we see here that Christ is at once immanent within the church and transcendent over it, as He is both within and above the cosmos. And this carefully balanced statement of Christ’s role was designed to encourage the church militant here on Earth! What a profound revelation this is!

Then the Holy Spirit moved us on to Ephesians 2:6 where we learned that we have been made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places. Ephesians 2:4-6 says:

“God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

The Holy Spirit opened the eyes of our heart and some of us realized for the first time that we are seated together with Jesus right now in the heavenly places far above all principalities and power and might and dominion. In spirit, we are *enthroned* with Christ in the third heaven! This is **our position**. God Himself enthroned us with Christ in the heavenly realms. As we said last week...

- This is a fact to know
- A truth to be believed
- *And* a position to be experienced!

Our position is not affected by our feelings! Our position is not affected by our behavior! Our position is not even affected by our own thinking! Our position is eternal *and* unchangeable in Christ whether we know it or not. As our eyes are opened to this very particular truth we may become very elated! We may find ourselves saying.....

“What a lofty position we have! What a high calling! I am enthroned! In Him, I’m above it all! In spirit, I’m in heaven right now! In the first heaven - No! In the second heaven - No! In the third heaven, Yes! In union with Christ, in spirit we are seated with Him *presently* in the third heaven!”

For it is written: “*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*” (1 Corinthians 6:17) Where He is, so we are; and as He is so we are in this world. (John 4:17) Feeling excited after receiving this revelation of our enthronement with Christ, we may think to ourselves that there is nothing more to obtain - no further light to receive. We might as well just leave this world and go home to be with the Lord now!

But in faithfulness, the Spirit moves us on and shows us something else! And what a view this is. What a stronghold for our faith! What an undergirding for our prayer life! We find this next revelation of truth in Ephesians 3:8-11 where Paul says,

⁸To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

⁹and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

¹⁰to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,

¹¹according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

After reading this passage of scripture several times, I was struck by this word ‘*purpose!*’ So, I looked more deeply into its meaning. The revelation of this particular truth has impacted my Christian walk profoundly and my prayer life immensely! Listen to what Jack Hayford says on this particular passage.

“It appears that Paul was deeply stirred by an expanding revelation about the church. The text soars as Paul cites God’s intent to display the church before all evil powers as His instrument to disperse throughout the earth what he has already accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (that is, through Jesus’ death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification).”

Let me read verse 10 again, “*...to the intent that **now** the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places...*”

In this passage we see one of the Father’s *purposes* for our enthronement with Christ in the heavenly places...in the third heaven! We are called to war, but from a position of our Lord’s victory: from His Enthronement! The church is called and commissioned to implement what Jesus has already accomplished through His life, death, resurrection and enthronement.

The Holy Spirit has been strategically leading us these last several weeks to bring us where we are this evening.

- In Ephesians 1:3 we see it is the Father who blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.
- In Ephesians 1:20-22 we see that it is the Father who gave to the church a Head who is also Head over all things to encourage the church militant while here on Earth!
- In Ephesians 2:6 we see that it is the Father who raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

And now in Ephesians 3:10 we see that the Father's *purpose* for our enthronement with Christ is to display the church before all evil powers as His instruments to dispense throughout the earth what he has already accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. What boldness this gives us as we realize it is the Father who has placed us in partnership, in fellowship, with His Son Jesus Christ. It is the Father who *enthroned us in spirit!*

And for what purpose? So that the church would be used as His instrument to implement what He has accomplished in Christ's death, buried, resurrection, and glorification: to manifest His reigning power here on Earth. (Colossians 1:13; I Corinthians 1:9; Matthew 16:18-19) **This** is the Church's call! We are to go in His name as His ambassadors in the authority He has given us. **This** is our Father's will! But do we know it? And if you do know it, have you responded?

John said in the book of Revelation [7:10],

"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying:

'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!''"

And salvation includes our enthronement!

Lets stand this evening and join Karen Wheaton in giving glory and honor to God our Father who sits upon the throne *and* to the Lamb - our Lord Jesus - for all that has been freely given to us at such a cost to Him.

[Lord You Are Holy](#)

To God be the glory, and to God alone!

For Further Reflection:

**THE ENTHRONED LIFE
A REVELATION**
from The Enthroned Christian
by F. J. Huegel

**CHRISTIAN SERVICE
IN RELATION TO THE THRONE**
From The Enthroned Christian
By F.J. Huegel

THE GAZE OF THE SOUL
from The Pursuit of God
By A.W. Tozer

THE ENTHRONED LIFE
A REVELATION
from The Enthroned Christian
by F. J. Huegel

We must press on to maturity. We must attain to "the measure of the fullness of Chris," and not remain in God's kindergarten indefinitely. If we grow into manhood in the spiritual life we shall not escape conflict. As long as Ephesians 6:10-18 remains in the Bible, we must be prepared for serious warfare- "And having done all, to stand."

-J.O. Fraser

That Throne Life for the Apostle Paul was a fact to be translated into vital experience is evidenced by the earnest prayer which he offers on behalf of his brothers and sisters at Ephesus. It will be well to quote this entire prayer.

"Therefore I also after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power..." (Eph. 1:15-19).

At this point it would be well for us to break off for a moment and ask, "Just what is this mighty power which causes the apostle to heap glory upon glory in an effort to reveal to the Ephesians, and through them to all Christians, 'the riches of the glory of God's inheritance' in the saints?" He seems almost beside himself in an effort to express what cannot be expressed. There are no words in human speech, it would seem, that can satisfy him. What he wishes to convey to his fellow Christians is so great that he becomes desperate in his efforts to expound it. He falls back therefore, in earnest intercession that the Father of glory might give to the Ephesians the spirit of wisdom and revelation, might enlighten the eyes of their understanding so that they may grasp what after all cannot be expressed. What is this mighty power so exceeding great which is "toward us who believe?" It is, Paul affirms, the power "which He [the Father of glory] worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead" (Eph 1:20).

There you have it! The believer is a participant of the selfsame power that Father worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. This is the persistent basic idea of Paul's epistles, and perhaps the most luminous star in the firmament of divine revelation. It is the very glory of redemption. In simplest terms it reads thus: The Savior's resurrection is the Christian's resurrection – they are one. "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Cor. 6:17). What falls to the Head, falls to each member of the body. What happened to the Savior befell Him in His character as Son of Man, the federal head of a redeemed humanity, and therefore is communicated, *ipso facto*, to every member of His body.

But Paul goes beyond mere resurrection. Enthroned Life is the goal of his thought. We have not simply been raised up with Christ, but – and this is the point at issue- with him have been made to sit in heavenly places. So we go on with the Ephesians prayer, taking it up where we left off: "... and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And he put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephes. 1:20-23). The thought is clear and simple. The power which works in the believer is the power that the Father exerted in Christ when He raised Him up and set Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all principality and might, and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in that which is to come.

It leaves one breathless! One would not dare to utter such things were it not the plain teaching of the Scriptures. Were it not the Holy Spirit speaking through the apostle, one would be afraid of such sublimities. It would be natural to cry out: "This is presumption!" But it is not presumption to believe God's Word. Pride is the handmaid of doubt, not of faith. We must be careful here, so as not to be deluded by a mock-humility which would have us grovel in the dust when God offers us a throne. The devil fights these things because he knows they mean the overthrow of his strongholds. He preaches us pretty sermons on humility, but the end is disobedience, doubt, pride and sterility. Let us not heed the false reports of the spies who were overawed by the Jerichos of the Land of Promise. Let us arise and enter in though there be giants! It is a good land flowing with milk and honey!

The key verse of Ephesians is found in the first chapter, verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." It is a thing that has already been done. Our own feelings have nothing to do with the matter. Whether our Christian experience may have risen up to this or has fallen far below such a standard does not inter into the picture. (We shall come to that in the next chapter.) What matters are the divine affirmations of true Christian experience as declared by the Word of God. Experience is not criterion. Experiences fluctuate; no two are quite the same. God lays down a universal standard. It is to this that Christian experience must direct itself. God's verdict is that believers are identified with Christ in both His death and resurrection. He bids us reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God through Christ our Lord. He tells us that He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. He tells us that with Jesus we have been raised up and that we have been made to sit together with Him in those heavenly realms. The exceeding great power – which works in us! – is the very same power which operated in Christ when He ascended to the Father's Throne. These are the affirmations of God in His Holy Word. I may never realize all this in conscious experience; still, it is my judicial standing before God. He affirms it – not I! If I refuse to bring experience up to the level where what God declares to be my judicial standing is fully translated into a present experience, I do not only rob myself of infinite riches but contradict the Most High; I make void His Holy Word and sin is at my door.

Plain as it all is, it takes a revelation, as Paul said in his prayer, to bring Christians to such a standard. But that should not startle us. All Christian experience in the final analysis is based on revelation. You get nowhere without it. "Lord", Paul cried in effect, "give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of these things." When Peter confessed his faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God, he was told that he had received a revelation from the Father, and that flesh and blood had had nothing to do with such knowledge. Paul declares that no man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit. The Savior Himself said that it was the function of the Holy Spirit to take the things that had to do with His Person and salvation and reveal them to believers. The author and Finisher of our faith is Christ the Lord, in view of which fact it becomes only too clear that there can be no progress without revelation. I repeat, if Throne Life requires a revelation before it can be realized, well nothing else in the Christian life is realized without the Illumination and work of the Holy Spirit.

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above." It is not the "if" of doubt, but of sequence. "Since you were raised with Christ..." is the thought, "set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1-3). It is the same as the Ephesians proclamation. The sublimities of Throne Life are not hazy fancies. They are the crown of the eternal verities of the Christian life. "You die, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Thus in cryptic fashion the apostle reiterates the great fact, the full glory of which he cannot explain, but which he prays the Spirit might reveal: namely, that the believer shares the Savior's "Cross, and therefore also His resurrection and His Throne.

CHRISTIAN SERVICE IN RELATION TO THE THRONE

From The Enthroned Christian

By F.J. Huegel

CHRISTIAN service never comes to its fullest, richest expression until it issues from the Throne; for its form, character and efficacy depend, in the final analysis, upon the quality of the life and motive which lie at its roots. Christian work, whether it be ministerial or lay, the giving of a cup of water or the preaching of a great sermon, is not worthy of the name except it be wrought in Jesus 'name and spirit. This takes us to the springs of the Christian life – the 'rivers of living water' which the Savior promised would flow from hearts rooted in Him.

It is not so much service or work that is required but fruit, as we read in John 15. Work is apt to be mechanical and may be wrought in the energy of "the flesh"; i.e., the natural man. But "fruit" springs up spontaneously and inevitably where the life is hid with Christ in God. "He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." With this incisive word the Savior Himself establishes his word the Savior Himself establishes the point under discussion. Our lives, as believers, are to issue from Christ as the branch issues from the vine. The rest takes care of itself. Whether it be the greatest missionary undertaking or the most ordinary Christian service (but Christian service is never ordinary), unless it be a genuine overflow of that life of which Christ is the spring, sterility or futility will sooner or later be manifest.

Of course, whenever a truly born-again believer with a living faith in Christ renders Christian service, seeking to serve his fellow-men in the Redeemer's name, the Spirit of Christ will be manifest. But there are degrees: the volume may be very meager...it may be but a trickling stream. The amazons is one thing, a tiny rivulet quite another, and Christ promised "rivers of living water." Ezekiel in his vision (chapter 47) saw a stream issuing from beneath the alter of the temple; at first it rose to the ankles, then to the knees, then to the thighs, then there were waters to swim in, which bore healing and power an life to everything they touched.

John on Patmos saw that it is from the Throne and from the Lamb that the river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds. If we are to be channels of blessing to a dying world we must, by faith, stand in immediate proximity to the Enthroned Christ. With Him we have been raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places. It is when we enter into the experience of the Enthroned Life that the volume of living water issuing from our hearts reaches its maximum outflow. When wrought in the energy of the "self-life" Christian work is like pumping from an all-but-dry well, but is becomes a spring from which rivers of living water flow spontaneously when its source is the Pauline position, so forcefully expressed in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The way to fruit bearing which will satisfy the thirst of Christ is that of the cross, resurrection, ascension, and the Throne. These must be reproduced in us. "He who overcomes will I grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne"; her lies the secret.

Christian work, whatever the manner of extending Christ's kingdom, inevitably means a collision with opposing forces. On the mission field it means a clash with entrenched wickedness, idolatry, and the satanic hierarchy. These mountains are hard to move. But the mountains of opposition in so-called Christian lands are often no less immovable. It took me many years to learn that it is quite useless to attempt to move the visible barriers until you have moved the invisible one. I have spent years as a missionary of the cross battling to overcome barriers which, once the situation was understood and the right weapons were grasped, were wiped out overnight. The enthroned life with its delegated authority made all the difference. In

many lands – yea, in many a church or mission- God’s work is at a standstill, and in spite of tears, prayers, struggling, and love is held up for years. What is wrong? The authority of the throne exercised by a believe who knows how to wield weapons which are not carnal, but mighty through God for the overthrow of the strongholds of Satan, is the only lever that will remove such mountains.

We keep forgetting that we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places (Eph. 6). WE get nowhere until these are overthrown. The more glittering the ecclesiastical pomp, often the better the hiding place for these dark spirits – and it fools no one whose eyes have been opened to spiritual realities. Mere preaching cannot move these mountains: singing won’t do it; nor will praying unless it be praying of a certain type. It takes prayer-warfare. We must be willing to face the actual foe. So long as we wrestle against mere flesh and blood, our position is as ridiculous as that of a soldier attempting to move some Gibraltar so with a toy pistol. Modern warfare clearly illustrated the point. The forces of air combat must do their work before the ground forces can advance. Jesus the Lord proceeded on this basis. He said He first bound “the strong man” before spoiling his goods.

Here is the reason why much of the fundamentalist’s fighting comes to naught. The modernist heresy still stands entrenched in seminaries and pulpits, from which it long since should have been uprooted. What is the matter? We wrestle against “flesh and blood.” As a result, only too often, those who believe in the virgin birth, atoning death of our Lord, and His bodily resurrection get into “the flesh” themselves; and the Spirit is grieved if not quenched altogether by this kind of fighting.

How different when we realize that prime agency in this sort of thing is demonic. The Satanic machinery must be dealt with first. WE wrestle not against “flesh and blood” but against “principalities and powers.” From the Throne we see that as we share the authority of the exalted, enthroned Christ, we truly shrivel the thing up by a word- the command of faith- even as the Lord Himself cursed the barren fig tree and shriveled it up from the very roots. There are hundreds of Christian workers wasting their time fighting “modernism.” You have got to cast out the demons first, and when you do, the thing shrivels up of its own accord.

When we come to understand the principles operating in the “Enthroned Life” and are stripped of “self-life” (the cross is ever co-active with the Throne when it is true, pure and free from all Satanic counterfeits)...when, I repeat, we come to understand and share the throne, we proceed on a very different basis. We do not move towards victory, but from a victory already consummated. WE proceed from our blessed Redeemer’s throne and all that it represents. When the believer, operating in the power of Christ’s ascension, undertakes, for example, to give the gospel message to needy souls in an evangelistic effort, he does not do so without first clearing the ground in the heavenlies. He first binds the invisible hosts of darkness before he ventures to attack on a visible plane. He established the fact of the victory of Christ already consummated on Calvary, where through death He destroyed him who has the power of death, the devil, by a simple word of testimony (see Revelation 12:11). Before the invisible hosts of darkness of which Satan is the head, he says in effect, in an act of prayer: “On Calvary’s cross the Savior bruised the Serpent’s head. With Jesus my Lord I have been raised up and made to sit in heavenly places far above all principalities and power and might. By virtue of my oneness with my Lord I exercise that authority which He has delegated to me - I clear the ground of demon forces; I bind the Strong Man.” When a soldier of Christ enters into battle on such a basis, with a view to extending his Master’s kingdom, there is never a question as to the outcome.

THE GAZE OF THE SOUL

from The Pursuit of God

By A.W. Tozer

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. — Heb 12:2

Let us think of our intelligent plain man mentioned in chapter six coming for the first time to the reading of the Scriptures. He approaches the Bible without any previous knowledge of what it contains. He is wholly without prejudice; he has nothing to prove and nothing to defend.

Such a man will not have read long until his mind begins to observe certain truths standing out from the page. They are the spiritual principles behind the record of God's dealings with men, and woven into the writings of holy men as they 'were moved by the Holy Ghost.' As he reads on he might want to number these truths as they become clear to him and make a brief summary under each number. These summaries will be the tenets of his Biblical creed. Further reading will not affect these points except to enlarge and strengthen them. Our man is finding out what the Bible actually teaches. High up on the list of things which the Bible teaches will be the doctrine of faith.

The place of weighty importance which the Bible gives to faith will be too plain for him to miss. He will very likely conclude: Faith is all- important in the life of the soul. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). Faith will get me anything, take me anywhere in the Kingdom of God, but without faith there can be no approach to God, no forgiveness, no deliverance, no salvation, no communion, no spiritual life at all.

By the time our friend has reached the eleventh chapter of Hebrews the eloquent encomium which is there pronounced upon faith will not seem strange to him. He will have read Paul's powerful defense of faith in his Roman and Galatian epistles. Later if he goes on to study church history he will understand the amazing power in the teachings of the Reformers as they showed the central place of faith in the Christian religion.

Now if faith is so vitally important, if it is an indispensable must in our pursuit of God, it is perfectly natural that we should be deeply concerned over whether or not we possess this most precious gift. And our minds being what they are, it is inevitable that sooner or later we should get around to inquiring after the nature of faith. What is faith? would lie close to the question, Do I have faith? and would demand an answer if it were anywhere to be found. Almost all who preach or write on the subject of faith have much the same things to say concerning it. They tell us that it is believing a promise, that it is taking God at His word, that it is reckoning the Bible to be true and stepping out upon it. The rest of the book or sermon is usually taken up with stories of persons who have had their prayers answered as a result of their faith. These answers are mostly direct gifts of a practical and temporal nature such as health, money, physical protection or success in business. Or if the teacher is of a philosophic turn of mind he may take another course and lose us in a welter of metaphysics or snow us under with psychological jargon as he defines and re-defines, paring the slender hair of faith thinner and thinner till it disappears in gossamer shavings at last. When he is finished we get up disappointed and go out 'by that same door where in we went.' Surely there must be something better than this.

In the Scriptures there is practically no effort made to define faith. Outside of a brief fourteen-word definition in Hebrews 11:1, I know of no Biblical definition, and even there faith is defined functionally, not philosophically; that is, it is a statement of what faith is in operation, not what it is in essence. It assumes the presence of faith and shows what it results in, rather than what it is.

We will be wise to go just that far and attempt to go no further. We are told from whence it comes and by what means: 'Faith is a gift of God,' (Eph 2:8) and 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' (Rom 10:17) This much is clear, and, to paraphrase Thomas à Kempis, 'I had rather exercise faith than know the definition thereof.'

From here on, when the words 'faith is' or their equivalent occur in this chapter I ask that they be understood to refer to what faith is in operation as exercised by a believing man. Right here we drop the notion of definition and think about faith as it may be experienced in action. The complexion of our thoughts will be practical, not theoretical.

In a dramatic story in the Book of Numbers faith is seen in action. Israel became discouraged and spoke against God, and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them. 'And they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.' Then Moses sought the Lord for them and He heard and gave them a remedy against the bite of the serpents. He commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole in sight of all the people, 'and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.' Moses obeyed, 'and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived' (Num.21:4-9)

In the New Testament this important bit of history is interpreted for us by no less an authority than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is explaining to His hearers how they may be saved. He tells them that it is by believing. Then to make it clear He refers to this incident in the Book of Numbers. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life' (John 3:14-15).

Our plain man in reading this would make an important discovery. He would notice that 'look' and 'believe' were synonymous terms. 'Looking' on the Old Testament serpent is identical with 'believing' on the New Testament Christ. That is, the looking and the believing are the same thing. And he would understand that while Israel looked with their external eyes, believing is done with the heart. I think he would conclude that faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God.

When he had seen this he would remember passages he had read before, and their meaning would come flooding over him. 'They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed' (Ps.34:5). 'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us' (Ps.123:1-2). Here the man seeking mercy looks straight at the God of mercy and never takes his eyes away from Him till mercy is granted. And our Lord Himself looked always at God. 'Looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the bread to his disciples' (Matt.14:19). Indeed Jesus taught that He wrought His works by always keeping His inward eyes upon His Father. His power lay in His continuous look at God (John 5:19-21).

In full accord with the few texts we have quoted is the whole tenor of the inspired Word. It is summed up for us in the Hebrew epistle when we are instructed to run life's race 'looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.' (Hebr 12:2) From all this we learn that faith is not a once-done act, but a continuous gaze of the heart at the Triune God.

Believing, then, is directing the heart's attention to Jesus. It is lifting the mind to 'behold the Lamb of God,' and never ceasing that beholding for the rest of our lives. At first this may be difficult, but it becomes easier as we look steadily at His wondrous Person, quietly and without strain. Distractions may hinder, but once the heart is committed to Him, after each brief

excursion away from Him the attention will return again and rest upon Him like a wandering bird coming back to its window.

I would emphasize this one committal, this one great volitional act which establishes the heart's intention to gaze forever upon Jesus. God takes this intention for our choice and makes what allowances He must for the thousand distractions which beset us in this evil world. He knows that we have set the direction of our hearts toward Jesus, and we can know it too, and comfort ourselves with the knowledge that a habit of soul is forming which will become after a while a sort of spiritual reflex requiring no more conscious effort on our part.

Faith is the least self-regarding of the virtues. It is by its very nature scarcely conscious of its own existence. Like the eye which sees everything in front of it and never sees itself, faith is occupied with the Object upon which it rests and pays no attention to itself at all. While we are looking at God we do not see ourselves--blessed riddance. The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the perfect One. While he looks at Christ the very things he has so long been trying to do will be getting done within him. It will be God working in him to will and to do.

Faith is not in itself a meritorious act; the merit is in the One toward Whom it is directed. Faith is a redirecting of our sight, a getting out of the focus of our own vision and getting God into focus. Sin has twisted our vision inward and made it self-regarding. Unbelief has put self where God should be, and is perilously close to the sin of Lucifer who said, 'I will set my throne above the throne of God.' Faith looks out instead of in and the whole life falls into line.

All this may seem too simple. But we have no apology to make. To those who would seek to climb into heaven after help or descend into hell God says, 'The word is nigh thee, even in the word of faith.' The word induces us to lift up our eyes unto the Lord and the blessed work of faith begins.

When we lift our inward eyes to gaze upon God we are sure to meet friendly eyes gazing back at us, for it is written that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout all the earth. The sweet language of experience is 'Thou God seest me.' When the eyes of the soul looking out meet the eyes of God looking in, heaven has begun right here on this earth.

'When all my endeavour is turned toward Thee because all Thy endeavour is turned toward me; when I look unto Thee alone with all my attention, nor ever turn aside the eyes of my mind, because Thou dost enfold me with Thy constant regard; when I direct my love toward Thee alone because Thou, who art Love's self hast turned Thee toward me alone. And what, Lord, is my life, save that embrace wherein Thy delightful sweetness doth so lovingly enfold me?' (So wrote Nicholas of Cusa four hundred years ago. Nicholas of Cusa, *The Vision of God*, E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York, 1928. - This and the following quotations used by kind permission of the publishers.) I should like to say more about this old man of God. He is not much known today anywhere among Christian believers, and among current Fundamentalists he is known not at all. I feel that we could gain much from a little acquaintance with men of his spiritual flavor and the school of Christian thought which they represent. Christian literature, to be accepted and approved by the evangelical leaders of our times, must follow very closely the same train of thought, a kind of 'party line' from which it is scarcely safe to depart. A half-century of this in America has made us smug and content. We imitate each other with slavish devotion and our most strenuous efforts are put forth to try to say the same thing that everyone

around us is saying--and yet to find an excuse for saying it, some little safe variation on the approved theme or, if no more, at least a new illustration.

Nicholas was a true follower of Christ, a lover of the Lord, radiant and shining in his devotion to the Person of Jesus. His theology was orthodox, but fragrant and sweet as everything about Jesus might properly be expected to be. His conception of eternal life, for instance, is beautiful in itself and, if I mistake not, is nearer in spirit to John 17:3 than that which is current among us today. Life eternal, says Nicholas, is 'nought other than that blessed regard wherewith Thou never ceasest to behold me, yea, even the secret places of my soul. With Thee, to behold is to give life; 'tis unceasingly to impart sweetest love of Thee; 'tis to inflame me to love of Thee by love's imparting, and to feed me by inflaming, and by feeding to kindle my yearning, and by kindling to make me drink of the dew of gladness, and by drinking to infuse in me a fountain of life, and by infusing to make it increase and endure.' (The Vision of God)

Now, if faith is the gaze of the heart at God, and if this gaze is but the raising of the inward eyes to meet the all-seeing eyes of God, then it follows that it is one of the easiest things possible to do. It would be like God to make the most vital thing easy and place it within the range of possibility for the weakest and poorest of us. Several conclusions may fairly be drawn from all this. The simplicity of it, for instance. Since believing is looking, it can be done without special equipment or religious paraphernalia. God has seen to it that the one life-and-death essential can never be subject to the caprice of accident.

Equipment can break down or get lost, water can leak away, records can be destroyed by fire, the minister can be delayed or the church burn down. All these are external to the soul and subject to accident or mechanical failure: but looking is of the heart and can be done successfully by any man standing up or kneeling down or lying in his last agony a thousand miles from any church.

Since believing is looking it can be done any time. No season is superior to another season for this sweetest of all acts. God never made salvation depend upon new moons nor holy days or sabbaths. A man is not nearer to Christ on Easter Sunday than he is, say, on Saturday, August 3, or Monday, October 4. As long as Christ sits on the mediatorial throne every day is a good day and all days are days of salvation.

Neither does place matter in this blessed work of believing God. Lift your heart and let it rest upon Jesus and you are instantly in a sanctuary though it be a Pullman berth or a factory or a kitchen. You can see God from anywhere if your mind is set to love and obey Him.

Now, someone may ask, 'Is not this of which you speak for special persons such as monks or ministers who have by the nature of their calling more time to devote to quiet meditation? I am a busy worker and have little time to spend alone.' I am happy to say that the life I describe is for everyone of God's children regardless of calling. It is, in fact, happily practiced every day by many hardworking persons and is beyond the reach of none.

Many have found the secret of which I speak and, without giving much thought to what is going on within them, constantly practice this habit of inwardly gazing upon God. They know that something inside their hearts sees God. Even when they are compelled to withdraw their conscious attention in order to engage in earthly affairs, there is within them a secret communion always going on. Let their attention but be released for a moment from necessary business and it flies at once to God again. This has been the testimony of many Christians, so many that even as I state it thus I have a feeling that I am quoting, though from whom or from how many I cannot possibly know.

I do not want to leave the impression that the ordinary means of grace have no value. They most assuredly have. Private prayer should be practiced by every Christian. Long periods of Bible meditation will purify our gaze and direct it; church attendance will enlarge our outlook and increase our love for others. Service and work and activity; all are good and should be engaged in by every Christian. But at the bottom of all these things, giving meaning to them, will be the inward habit of beholding God. A new set of eyes (so to speak) will develop within us enabling us to be looking at God while our outward eyes are seeing the scenes of this passing world.

Someone may fear that we are magnifying private religion out of all proportion, that the 'us' of the New Testament is being displaced by a selfish 'I.' Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? they are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified. The body becomes stronger as its members become healthier. The whole Church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and higher life.

All the foregoing presupposes true repentance and a full committal of the life to God. It is hardly necessary to mention this, for only persons who have made such a committal will have read this far. When the habit of inwardly gazing Godward becomes fixed within us we shall be ushered onto a new level of spiritual life more in keeping with the promises of God and the mood of the New Testament. The Triune God will be our dwelling place even while our feet walk the low road of simple duty here among men. We will have found life's summum bonum* indeed. 'There is the source of all delights that can be desired; not only can nought better be thought out by men and angels, but nought better can exist in any mode of being! For it is the absolute maximum of every rational desire, than which a greater cannot be.

(The Vision of God)

O Lord, I have heard a good word inviting me to look away to Thee and be satisfied. My heart longs to respond, but sin has clouded my vision till I see Thee but dimly. Be pleased to cleanse me in Thine own precious blood, and make me inwardly pure, so that I may with unveiled eyes gaze upon Thee all the days of my earthly pilgrimage. Then shall I be prepared to behold Thee in full splendor in the day when Thou shalt appear to be glorified in Thy saints and admired in all them that believe. Amen.

***Summum bonum** is a Latin expression meaning "the highest good", which was introduced by [Cicero](#), to correspond to the Idea of the Good in Greek [philosophy](#). The *summum bonum* is generally thought of as being an end in itself, and at the same time as containing all other goods. The term was used in [medieval philosophy](#) and in [Kantianism](#), to describe the [ultimate importance](#), the singular and overriding end which human beings ought to pursue; while in the [Thomist](#) synthesis of Aristotelianism and [Christianity](#), the highest [good](#) is usually defined as the life of the righteous, the life led in [Communion](#) with [God](#) and according to God's precepts.

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A Word on His Glory

True humility is ever in company with strong faith, which only seeks to know what is according to the will of God, and then boldly claims the fulfillment of the promise. "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Andrew Murray

Week 9 of 11

A Word on His Glory

Did you know that we are taught in scripture that our capacity to trust the Lord is clearly linked to our knowledge of His name? It's true! The Psalmist said, *"Those who know Your name will put their trust in You."* (Psalm 9:10)

Did you also know that victory in battle is linked to the power of His name? We find this in Psalm 44:4-5: *"Through You we will push back our enemies; through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us."* Or as the Amplified Bible says, *"Through You shall we push down our enemies; through Your name shall we tread them under who rise up against us."*

Later on Christ extended to His disciples (and to us) a certain "power of attorney" – the authority to use His name in transacting business on His behalf. For He says to us in John 14:12-14,

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name I will do it."

Let me share from Jack Hayford's book, Living and Praying in the Name of Jesus, which will help open this passage up to us.

"When Jesus told His disciples to 'ask anything in My name' in John 14:12-14, He used a Greek expression that also can mean 'make a claim based on my name.' To understand precisely what Jesus meant in using these words, consider the record of the early church and the way Jesus' disciples interpreted the words, for they heard Jesus speak them in their own language. The first recorded instance of Christ's disciples "claiming" or "using" His name is found in Acts 3 where we discover Peter and John visiting the temple for prayer. As they approached the gate, a crippled man pleads for financial aid. Boldly Peter assumes what might be described as an authoritative "prayer stance." Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk' (Acts 3:6).

And although some might question whether this is prayer at all, it clearly is an instance of exercising 'the power of attorney' given by Christ to His disciples in the upper room just hours before He went to Gethsemane. Note carefully the nature of Peter's prayer. He doesn't expressly ask God to do anything in Jesus' name; rather he makes a claim based on Christ's name. He employs the authority of Jesus' name and commands the crippled man to rise and walk. Seconds later, but only after Peter actually lifts him up - a further act of authority - the man goes "walking and leaping, and praising God." "Peter took him by the right hand and lifted him up and immediately His feet and ankle bones received strength" (Acts 3:8).

So exercising our authority in Jesus' name may go beyond merely asking our Lord to grant a particular request. It may mean we actually command a situation to change in Jesus' name simply because Christ has already given us that authority. He said, "Whoever says to this mountain, 'Be moved' and does not doubt in his heart, he shall have whatever he says" (Mark 11:23).

He also gives strong assurance to us of answered prayer when we pray to the Father with faith in His name. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and

bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” He also says to us in John 16:32-24, “And in that day you will ask Me nothing, most assuredly, I say to you, whatsoever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy might be full.”

Our question here is: How do we come to have a fuller faith and confidence that our prayers will be answered when we pray in Jesus’ name? How are we brought to a place of expectation that our prayers will be heard? To a place free from doubt? A place where we know that we will receive that which we have asked for? (Mark 11:23)

Whether it be our employing the authority of Jesus’ name as described for us in John 14:12 or petitioning the Father in Jesus’ name as we see in John 15:16, how can we be brought to a place of knowing we will receive what we have asked for? Once again, we return to the word of God for the answer to our question.

The author of Proverbs hints at the answer to our question when he declares, “*The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and they are safe.*” (Psalm 18:10) Or, as we read in the Amplified Bible, “*The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the [consistently] righteous man [upright and in right standing with God] runs into it and is safe, high [above evil] and strong.*”

What do we see in this passage? We see movement! The righteous run into it!

As Jack Hayford so descriptively says:

“Living and praying in the name of Jesus means much more than merely voicing a three word expression at the end of a prayer. It means to move into Jesus’ name through prayer; it is to step into each day in the power of WHO HE IS! Living and praying in Jesus’ name begins by our pursuing a disciplined awareness of His nature and character as revealed by the many names and titles He is assigned in scripture. Then it continues when we saturate ourselves with an understanding of what it means to pray in the power of a specific facet of His person.”

We began to saturate ourselves with an understanding of what it means that Jesus is the Head over all things, didn’t we? We have returned frequently to this title during our weeks together. And each time we beheld Him this way our faith increased and the Holy Spirit moved us higher and higher in our thinking of Him, didn’t He? Beholding Jesus in His exaltation over the universe birthed faith in our hearts and elevated our confidence in Him!

And now this evening in prayer we want to acknowledge Him in our hearts as Head over all things! We want to acknowledge the One who “*...for the suffering of death shed His blood has been crowned by the Father with glory and honor.*” Worthy is THE LAMB!

We want to call upon the Father **in Jesus’ name** for the needs that we have this evening with expectation that He will answer our prayers and glorify His Son! The early church *expected* the miraculous! And so should we! They expected divine intervention *when* they called upon the Father in Jesus’ name. And so should we!

We see throughout the book of Acts God the Father continually glorifying Jesus! Continually answering prayers when offered *in faith* in His name! We see such an occasion as we return to our passage in Acts 3 verse 11.

“Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon’s, greatly amazed. So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong.’”

Faith in the name of Jesus! Faith in Jesus’ shed blood on our behalf. Faith in Jesus’ finished work. *“And faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) I believe faith has risen in our hearts as we have beheld...as we have *considered* JESUS...in our times together. Hearing truth has birthed faith in us and faith *positions* us to receive!

With the faith that has been imparted to us through the Word, let’s move into prayer this evening *expecting* the Father to impart to us what we have need of as we ask Him in Jesus’ name. For the Holy Spirit says to us in 2 Chronicles 16:9, *“The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout this whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...”* And He says to us in psalm 50:15, *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”*

Before we enter into worship as we listen to the song, [Lord You’re Holy \(Audio Visual\)](#), let’s just stand together with closed eyes and bowed heads and avail ourselves to the power of Jesus’ shed blood as we confess our sins - any sins that may be hindering our fellowship with God - and then in the privacy of your own heart tell Him what you have need of and then thank Him for answering your prayer **in Jesus’ name**.

“Holy Father, I ask that you move in power upon those who need physical healing this evening and move in power into the minds of those who need release from demonic oppression and stretch forth your hand and touch those who are broken hearted and in need of emotional healing and for those who need the infilling of the Holy Spirit, I ask that You minister that gift in Jesus’ name. And for all impartations Father, given in Jesus’ name, I vow to be careful to give you all the glory.”

For Further Reflection:

THE OBJECT OF FAITH (Hebrews 12:2)

from An Exposition of Hebrews
by A. W. Pink

THE GAZE OF THE SOUL

from The Pursuit of God
By A.W. Tozer

GRACE NOTES:

Looking Unto Jesus
By Theodore Monod

THE OBJECT OF FAITH
(Hebrews 12:2)
from An Exposition of Hebrews
by A. W. Pink

The verse which is now to engage our attention continues and completes the important exhortation found in the one which was before us in the last article. The two verses are so closely related that only the requirements of space obliged us to separate them. The latter supplies such a blessed sequel to the former that it will be necessary to present a summary of our comments thereon. We saw that the Christian life, the life of faith and obedience, is presented under the figure of a "race," which denotes that so far from its being a thing of dreamy contemplation or abstract speculation, it is one of activity, exertion, and progressive motion, for faith without works is dead. But the "race" speaks not only of activity, but of regulated activity, following the course which is "set before us." Many professing Christians are engaged in multitudinous efforts which God has never bidden them undertake: that is like running round and round in a circle. To follow the appointed track means that our energies be directed by the precepts of Holy Writ.

The order presented in Hebrews 12:1 is the negative before the positive: there must be the "laying aside" of hindering weights, before we can "run" the race set before us. This order is fundamental, and is emphasized all through Scripture. There must be a turning from the world, before there can be a real turning unto the Lord (Isa. 55:7); self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Matthew 16:24). There must be a putting off the old man, before there can be any true putting on of the new man (Eph. 4:22-24). There has to be a "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts," before we can "live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 3:12). There has to be a "cleansing of ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," before there can be any "perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1). We must "be not conformed to this world," before we can be "transformed by the renewing of our mind," so that we may "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2, 3).

Before the plants and flowers will flourish in the garden weeds must be rooted up, otherwise all the labors of the gardener will come to naught. As the Lord Jesus taught so plainly in the Parable of the Sower, where the "thorns" are permitted to thrive, the good Seed, the Word, is "choked" (Matthew 13:22); and it is very searching and solemn to note, by a careful comparison of the three records of it, that Christ interpreted this figure of the "thorns" more fully than any other single detail. He defined those choking "thorns" as "the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of riches," "the lust of other things and pleasures of this life." If those things fill and rule our hearts, our relish for spiritual things will be quenched, our strength to perform Christian duties will be sapped, our lives will be fruitless, and we shall be merely cumberers of the ground—the garden of our souls being filled with briars and weeds.

Hence it is that the first call in Hebrews 12:1 is "let us lay aside every weight." "Inordinate care for the present life, and fondness for it, is a dead weight for the soul, that pulls it down when it should ascend upwards and pulls it back when it should press forwards" (Matthew Henry). It is the practical duty of mortification which is here inculcated, the abstaining from those fleshly lusts "which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11). The racer must be as lightly clad as possible if he is to run swiftly: all that would cumber and impede him must be relinquished. Undue concern over temporal affairs, inordinate affection for the things of this life, the intemperate use of any material blessings, undue familiarity with the ungodly, are "weights" which prevent progress in godliness. A bag of gold would be as great a handicap to a runner as a bag of lead!

It is to be carefully noted that the laying aside of "every weight" precedes "and the sin which does so easily beset us", which has reference to indwelling corruption. Each Christian imagines that he is very anxious to be completely delivered from the power of indwelling sin: ah, but our hearts are very deceitful, and ever causing us to think more highly of ourselves than we

ought to think. A criterion is given in this passage by which we may gauge the sincerity of our desires: our longing to be delivered from indwelling evil is to be measured by our willingness and readiness to lay aside the "weights." I may think I am earnestly desirous of having a beautiful garden, and may go to much expense and trouble in purchasing and planting some lovely flowers; but if I am too careless and lazy to diligently fight the weeds, what is my desire worth? So, if I disregard that word "make not provision for the flesh unto the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:14), how sincere is my desire to be delivered from "the flesh!"

"And let us run with patience the race that is set before us." For this two things are needed: speed and strength—"rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" (Ps. 19:5): the one being opposed to sloth and negligence, the other to weakness. These are the prime requisites: strength in grace, diligence in exercise. Speed is included in the word "run", but how is the strength to be obtained? This "race" calls for both the doing and suffering for Christ, the pressing forward toward the mark set before us, the progressing from one degree of strength to another, the putting forth of our utmost efforts, the enduring unto the end. Ah, who is sufficient for such a task? First, we are reminded of those who have preceded us, many, a "great cloud": and their faith is recorded for our instruction, their victory for our encouragement. Yet that is not sufficient: their cases afford us a motive, but they do not supply the needed power. Hence, we are next told:

"Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (verse 2). "The cloud of witnesses is not the object on which our heart is fixed. They testify of faith, and we cherish their memory with gratitude, and walk with a firmer step because of the music of their lives. Our eye, however, is fixed, not on many, but on One; not on the army, but the Leader; not on the servants, but the Lord. We see Jesus only, and from Him we derive our true strength, even as He is our light of life" (Adolph Saphir). In all things Christ has the pre-eminence: He is placed here not among the other "racers," but as One who, instead of exemplifying certain characteristics of faith, as they did, is the "Author and Finisher" of faith in His own person.

Our text presents the Lord as the supreme Example for racers, as well as the great Object of their faith, though this is somewhat obscured by the rendering of the A.V. Our text is not referring to Christ begetting faith in His people and sustaining it to the end, though that is a truth plainly enough taught elsewhere. Instead, He is here viewed as the One, who Himself began and completed the whole course of faith, so as to be Himself the one perfect example and witness of what faith is. It was because of "the joy set before Him"—steadily and trustfully held in view—that He ran His race. His "enduring of the cross" was the completest trial and most perfect exemplification of faith. In consequence, He is now seated at the right hand of God, as both the Pattern and Object of faith, and His promise is "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).

It is to be duly noted that the little word "our" is a supplement, being supplied by the translators: it may without detriment, and with some advantage, be omitted. The Greek word for "Author" does not mean so much one who "causes" or "originates," as one who "takes the lead." The same word is rendered "Captain of our salvation" in Hebrews 2:10, and in Acts 3:15, the "Prince of life." There its obvious meaning is Leader or Chief, one going in advance of those who follow. The Savior is here represented as the Leader of all the long procession of those who had lived by faith, as the great Pattern for us to imitate. Confirmation of this is found in the Spirit's use of the personal name "Jesus" here, rather than His title of office—"Christ." Stress is thereby laid upon His humanity. The Man Jesus was so truly made like unto His brethren in all things that the life which He lived was the life of faith.

Yes, the life which Jesus lived here upon earth was a life of faith. This has not been given sufficient prominence. In this, as in all things, He is our perfect Model. "By faith He walked, looking always unto the Father, speaking and acting in filial dependence on the Father, and in

filial reception out of the Father's fullness. By faith He looked away from all discouragements, difficulties, and oppositions, committing His cause to the Lord, who had sent Him, to the Father, whose will He had come to fulfill. By faith He resisted and overcame all temptation, whether it came from Satan, or from the false Messianic expectations of Israel, or from His own disciples. By faith He performed the signs and wonders, in which the power and love of God's salvation were symbolized. Before He raised Lazarus from the grave, He, in the energy of faith, thanked God, who heard Him always. And here we are taught the nature of all His miracles: He trusted in God. He gave the command, 'Have faith in God', out of the fullness of His own experience" (Adolph Saphir).

But let us enter into some detail. What is a life of faith? First, it is a life lived in complete dependence upon God. "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding... in all thy ways acknowledge Him" (Prov. 3:5, 6.) Never did any so entirely, so unreservedly, so perfectly cast himself upon God as did the Man Christ Jesus; never was another so completely yielded to God's will. "I live by the Father" (John 6:57) was His own avowal. When tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger, He replied "man shall not live by bread alone." So sure was He of God's love and care for Him that He held fast to His trust and waited for Him. So patent to all was His absolute dependence upon God, that the very scorners around the cross turned it into a bitter taunt.—"He trusted in the Lord that He would deliver Him, let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him" (Ps. 22:8).

Second, a life of faith is a life lived in communion with God. And never did another live in such a deep and constant realization of the Divine presence as did the Man Christ Jesus. "I have set the Lord always before Me" (Ps. 16:8) was His own avowal. "He that sent Me is with Me" (John 8:29) was ever a present fact to His consciousness. He could say, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother's belly" (Ps. 22:10). "And in the morning, rising a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed" (Mark 1:35). From Bethlehem to Calvary He enjoyed unbroken and unclouded fellowship with the Father; and after the three hours of awful darkness was over, He cried "Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit."

Third, a life of faith is a life lived in obedience to God. Faith worketh by love (Gal. 5:6), and love delights to please its object. Faith has respect not only to the promises of God, but to His precepts as well. Faith not only trusts God for the future, but it also produces present subjection to His will. Supremely was this fact exemplified by the Man Christ Jesus. "I do always those things which please Him" (John 8:29) He declared. "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49) characterized the whole of His earthly course. Ever and anon we find Him conducting Himself. "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." He lived by every word of God. At the close He said, "I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

Fourth, a life of faith is a life of assured confidence in the unseen future. It is a looking away from the things of time and sense, a rising above the shows and delusions of this world, and having the affections set upon things above. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), enabling its possessor to live now in the power and enjoyment of that which is to come. That which enthralls and enchains the ungodly had no power over the perfect Man: "I have overcome the world" (John 16:31), He declared. When the Devil offered Him all its kingdoms, He promptly answered, "Get thee hence, Satan." So vivid was Jesus' realization of the unseen, that, in the midst of earth's engagements, He called Himself "the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:13).

"And so, dear brethren, this Jesus, in the absoluteness of His dependence upon the Father, in the completeness of His trust in Him, in the submission of His will to that Supreme command, in the unbroken communion which He held with God, in the vividness with which the Unseen ever burned before Him, and dwarfed and extinguished all the lights of the present, and in the respect which He had 'unto the recompense of the reward'; nerving Him for all pain and shame, has set before us all the example of a life of faith, and is our Pattern as in everything, in this too.

"How blessed it is to feel, when we reach out our hands and grope in the darkness for the unseen hand, when we try to bow our wills to that Divine will; when we seek to look beyond the mists of 'that dim spot which men call earth,' and to discern the land that is very far off; and when we endeavor to nerve ourselves for duty and sacrifice by bright visions of a future hope, that on this path of faith too, when He 'putteth forth His sheep, He goeth before them,' and has bade us do nothing which He Himself has not done! 'I will put My trust in Him,' He says first, and then He turns to us and commands, 'Believe in God, believe also in Me'" (A. Maclaren, to whom we are indebted for much in this article).

Alas, how very little real Christianity there is in the world today! Christianity consists in being conformed unto the image of God's Son. "Looking unto Jesus" constantly, trustfully, submissively, lovingly; the heart occupied with, the mind stayed upon Him—that is the whole secret of practical Christianity. Just in proportion as I am occupied with the example which Christ has left me, just in proportion as I am living upon Him and drawing from His fullness, am I realizing the ideal He has set before me. In Him is the power, from Him must be received the strength for running "with patience" or steadfast perseverance, the race. Genuine Christianity is a life lived in communion with Christ: a life lived by faith, as His was. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21); "Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20)—Christ living in me and through me.

There are four things said in our text about the Savior's life, each of which we need to ponder carefully. First, the motive or reason which prompted Jesus to do and suffer, wherein He is presented as our example and encouragement: "who for the joy that was set before Him." Here is made known to us what was the final moving cause in His mind which sustained the Savior to a persevering performance of duty, and of the endurance of all sufferings that duty entailed. Various definitions have been given of that "joy," and probably all of them are included within its scope. The glory of God was what the Redeemer preferred above all things: Hebrews 10:5-9, but that glory was inseparably bound up with the personal exaltation of the Redeemer and the salvation of His Church following the accomplishment of the work given Him to do. This was "set before Him" in the everlasting covenant.

Thus the "joy" that was set before Jesus was the doing of God's will, and His anticipation of the glorious reward which should be given Him in return. Hebrews 12:2 sustains the figure used in the previous verse: it is as the model Racer our Savior is here viewed. At the winning-post hung a crown, in full view of the racers, and this was ever before the eye of the Captain of our salvation, as He pursued the course appointed Him by the Father. He steadily kept before Him the cheering and blissful reward: His heart laid hold of the Messianic promises and prophecies recorded in Holy Writ: He had in steady prospect that satisfaction with which the travail of His soul would be fully compensated. By faith Abraham looked forward to a "City" (11:10); by faith Isaac anticipated "things to come" (11:20); by faith Moses "had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (11:26); and by faith, Jesus lived and died in the enjoyment of that which was "set before Him."

Second, He "endured the cross." Therein we have the Commander's example to His soldiers of heroic fortitude. Those words signify far more than that He experienced the shame and pain of crucifixion: they tell us that He stood steadfast under it all. He endured the cross not sullenly or even stoically, but in the highest and noblest sense of the term:—with holy composure of soul. He never wavered or faltered, murmured or complained: "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it" (John 18:11)! And He has left us an example that we should "follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2:21), and therefore does He declare, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross" (Matthew 16:24). Strength for this task is to be found by "looking unto Jesus," by keeping steadily before faith's eye the crown, the joy awaiting us.

Third, "despising the shame." Therein we see the Captain's contempt of whatever sought to bar His progress. We scarcely think of associating this word "despising" with the meek and lowly Jesus. It is an ugly term, yet there are things which deserve it. The Savior viewed things in their true perspective; He estimated them at their proper worth: in the light of the joy set before Him, He regarded hardship, ignominy, persecution, sufferings from men, as trifles. Here, too, He has left us "an example." But alas, instead of scorning it, we magnify and are intimidated by "the shame." How many are ashamed to be scripturally baptized and wear His uniform. How many are ashamed to openly confess Christ before the world. Meditate more upon the reward, the crown, the eternal joy—that outweighs all the little sacrifices we are now called upon to make.

Fourth, "and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Here we witness the Captain's triumph, His actual entrance into the joy anticipated, His being crowned with glory and honor. His "sitting down" denoted three things. First, rest after finished work, the race run. Second, being invested with dominion: He now occupies the place of supreme sovereignty: Matthew 28:18, Philippians 2:10. Third, being intrusted with the prerogative of judgment: John 17: 2, Acts 17:30. And what have these three things to do with us, His unworthy followers? Much indeed: eternal rest is assured the successful racer: Revelation 13:14. A place on Christ's throne is promised the overcomer: Revelation 3:21. Dominion too is the future portion of him who vanquishes this world: Revelation 2:26, 27. Finally, it is written "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? "Do ye not know we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3). "Joint heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:17).

One other word in our text yet remains to be considered: "looking unto Jesus the Author (Captain) and Finisher (Perfecter) of our faith." We have already seen from the other occurrences of this term (in its various forms) in our Epistle, that it is a very full one. Here, we believe, it has at least a twofold force. First, Completer: Jesus is the first and the last as an example of confidence in and submission unto God: He is the most complete model of faith and obedience that can be brought before us. Instead of including Him with the heroes of faith in chapter 11, He is here distinguished from them, as being above them. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending: as there was none hitherto who could be compared with Him, so there will be none hereafter. "Author and Finisher" or "Captain and Completer" means Jesus is beyond all comparison.

The fact that we are bidden to be looking unto Jesus as "the Leader and Finisher of faith" also denotes that He perfects our faith. How? First, by His grace flowing into us. We need something more than a flawless Model set before us: who can in his own strength imitate the perfect Man? But Christ has not only gone before His own, He also dwells in their hearts by faith, and as they yield themselves to His control (and only so) does He live through them. Second, by leading us (Ps. 23:3) along the path of discipline and trial, drawing our hearts away from the things of earth, and fixing them upon Himself. He often makes us lonesome here that we may seek His companionship. Finally, by actually conducting us to glory: He will "come again" (John 14:2) and conform us to His image.

"Looking unto Jesus." The person of the Savior is to be the "mark" on which the eyes of those who are pressing forward for the prize of the high calling of God, are to be fixed. Be constantly "looking" to Him, trustfully, submissively, hopefully, expectantly. He is the Fountain of all grace (John 1:16): our every need is supplied by God "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). Then seek the help of the Holy Spirit that the eye of faith be steadfastly fixed on Christ. He has declared "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," then let us add, "The Lord is my Helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5, 6). Salvation is by grace, through faith: it is through "faith" we are saved, not only from Hell, but also from this world (1 John 5:4), from temptation, from the power of indwelling sin—by coming to Christ, trusting in Him, drawing from Him.

What are the things which hinder us running? An active Devil, an evil world, indwelling sin, mysterious trials, fierce opposition, afflictions which almost make us doubt the love of the Father. Then call to mind the "great cloud of witnesses": they were men of like passions with us, they encountered the same difficulties and discouragements, they met with the same hindrances and obstacles. But they ran "with patience," they overcame, they won the victor's crown. How? By "looking unto Jesus": see Hebrews 11:26. But more: look away from difficulties (Rom. 4:19), from self, from fellow-racers, unto Him who has left us an example to follow, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, so that He is able to succor the tempted, strengthen the weak, guide the perplexed, supply our every need. Let the heart be centered in and the mind stayed upon HIM.

The more we are "looking unto Jesus" the easier will it be to "lay aside every weight." It is at this point so many fail. If the Christian denies self of different things without an adequate motive (for Christ's sake), he will still secretly hanker after the things relinquished, or ere long return to them, or become proud of his little sacrifices and become self-righteous. The most effective way of getting a child to drop any dirty or injurious object, is to proffer him something better. The best way to make a tired horse move more quickly, is not to use the whip, but to turn his head toward home! So, if our hearts be occupied with the sacrificial love of Christ for us, we shall be "constrained" thereby to drop all that which displeases Him; and the more we dwell upon the Joy set before us, the more strength shall we have to run "with patience the race that is set before us."

THE GAZE OF THE SOUL

from The Pursuit of God

By A.W. Tozer

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. — Heb 12:2

Let us think of our intelligent plain man mentioned in chapter six coming for the first time to the reading of the Scriptures. He approaches the Bible without any previous knowledge of what it contains. He is wholly without prejudice; he has nothing to prove and nothing to defend.

Such a man will not have read long until his mind begins to observe certain truths standing out from the page. They are the spiritual principles behind the record of God's dealings with men, and woven into the writings of holy men as they 'were moved by the Holy Ghost.' As he reads on he might want to number these truths as they become clear to him and make a brief summary under each number. These summaries will be the tenets of his Biblical creed. Further reading will not affect these points except to enlarge and strengthen them. Our man is finding out what the Bible actually teaches. High up on the list of things which the Bible teaches will be the doctrine of faith.

The place of weighty importance which the Bible gives to faith will be too plain for him to miss. He will very likely conclude: Faith is all- important in the life of the soul. Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6). Faith will get me anything, take me anywhere in the Kingdom of God, but without faith there can be no approach to God, no forgiveness, no deliverance, no salvation, no communion, no spiritual life at all.

By the time our friend has reached the eleventh chapter of Hebrews the eloquent encomium which is there pronounced upon faith will not seem strange to him. He will have read Paul's powerful defense of faith in his Roman and Galatian epistles. Later if he goes on to study church history he will understand the amazing power in the teachings of the Reformers as they showed the central place of faith in the Christian religion.

Now if faith is so vitally important, if it is an indispensable must in our pursuit of God, it is perfectly natural that we should be deeply concerned over whether or not we possess this most precious gift. And our minds being what they are, it is inevitable that sooner or later we should get around to inquiring after the nature of faith. What is faith? would lie close to the question, Do I have faith? and would demand an answer if it were anywhere to be found. Almost all who preach or write on the subject of faith have much the same things to say concerning it. They tell us that it is believing a promise, that it is taking God at His word, that it is reckoning the Bible to be true and stepping out upon it. The rest of the book or sermon is usually taken up with stories of persons who have had their prayers answered as a result of their faith. These answers are mostly direct gifts of a practical and temporal nature such as health, money, physical protection or success in business. Or if the teacher is of a philosophic turn of mind he may take another course and lose us in a welter of metaphysics or snow us under with psychological jargon as he defines and re-defines, paring the slender hair of faith thinner and thinner till it disappears in gossamer shavings at last. When he is finished we get up disappointed and go out 'by that same door where in we went.' Surely there must be something better than this.

In the Scriptures there is practically no effort made to define faith. Outside of a brief fourteen-word definition in Hebrews 11:1, I know of no Biblical definition, and even there faith is defined functionally, not philosophically; that is, it is a statement of what faith is in operation, not what it is in essence. It assumes the presence of faith and shows what it results in, rather than what it is.

We will be wise to go just that far and attempt to go no further. We are told from whence it comes and by what means: 'Faith is a gift of God,' (Eph 2:8) and 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' (Rom 10:17) This much is clear, and, to paraphrase Thomas à Kempis, 'I had rather exercise faith than know the definition thereof.'

From here on, when the words 'faith is' or their equivalent occur in this chapter I ask that they be understood to refer to what faith is in operation as exercised by a believing man. Right here we drop the notion of definition and think about faith as it may be experienced in action. The complexion of our thoughts will be practical, not theoretical.

In a dramatic story in the Book of Numbers faith is seen in action. Israel became discouraged and spoke against God, and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them. 'And they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.' Then Moses sought the Lord for them and He heard and gave them a remedy against the bite of the serpents. He commanded Moses to make a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole in sight of all the people, 'and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.' Moses obeyed, 'and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived' (Num.21:4-9)

In the New Testament this important bit of history is interpreted for us by no less an authority than our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is explaining to His hearers how they may be saved. He tells them that it is by believing. Then to make it clear He refers to this incident in the Book of Numbers. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life' (John 3:14-15).

Our plain man in reading this would make an important discovery. He would notice that 'look' and 'believe' were synonymous terms. 'Looking' on the Old Testament serpent is identical with 'believing' on the New Testament Christ. That is, the looking and the believing are the same thing. And he would understand that while Israel looked with their external eyes, believing is done with the heart. I think he would conclude that faith is the gaze of a soul upon a saving God.

When he had seen this he would remember passages he had read before, and their meaning would come flooding over him. 'They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed' (Ps.34:5). 'Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until that he have mercy upon us' (Ps.123:1-2). Here the man seeking mercy looks straight at the God of mercy and never takes his eyes away from Him till mercy is granted. And our Lord Himself looked always at God. 'Looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the bread to his disciples' (Matt.14:19). Indeed Jesus taught that He wrought His works by always keeping His inward eyes upon His Father. His power lay in His continuous look at God (John 5:19-21).

In full accord with the few texts we have quoted is the whole tenor of the inspired Word. It is summed up for us in the Hebrew epistle when we are instructed to run life's race 'looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.' (Hebr 12:2) From all this we learn that faith is not a once-done act, but a continuous gaze of the heart at the Triune God.

Believing, then, is directing the heart's attention to Jesus. It is lifting the mind to 'behold the Lamb of God,' and never ceasing that beholding for the rest of our lives. At first this may be difficult, but it becomes easier as we look steadily at His wondrous Person, quietly and without strain. Distractions may hinder, but once the heart is committed to Him, after each brief

excursion away from Him the attention will return again and rest upon Him like a wandering bird coming back to its window.

I would emphasize this one committal, this one great volitional act which establishes the heart's intention to gaze forever upon Jesus. God takes this intention for our choice and makes what allowances He must for the thousand distractions which beset us in this evil world. He knows that we have set the direction of our hearts toward Jesus, and we can know it too, and comfort ourselves with the knowledge that a habit of soul is forming which will become after a while a sort of spiritual reflex requiring no more conscious effort on our part.

Faith is the least self-regarding of the virtues. It is by its very nature scarcely conscious of its own existence. Like the eye which sees everything in front of it and never sees itself, faith is occupied with the Object upon which it rests and pays no attention to itself at all. While we are looking at God we do not see ourselves--blessed riddance. The man who has struggled to purify himself and has had nothing but repeated failures will experience real relief when he stops tinkering with his soul and looks away to the perfect One. While he looks at Christ the very things he has so long been trying to do will be getting done within him. It will be God working in him to will and to do.

Faith is not in itself a meritorious act; the merit is in the One toward Whom it is directed. Faith is a redirecting of our sight, a getting out of the focus of our own vision and getting God into focus. Sin has twisted our vision inward and made it self-regarding. Unbelief has put self where God should be, and is perilously close to the sin of Lucifer who said, 'I will set my throne above the throne of God.' Faith looks out instead of in and the whole life falls into line.

All this may seem too simple. But we have no apology to make. To those who would seek to climb into heaven after help or descend into hell God says, 'The word is nigh thee, even in the word of faith.' The word induces us to lift up our eyes unto the Lord and the blessed work of faith begins.

When we lift our inward eyes to gaze upon God we are sure to meet friendly eyes gazing back at us, for it is written that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout all the earth. The sweet language of experience is 'Thou God seest me.' When the eyes of the soul looking out meet the eyes of God looking in, heaven has begun right here on this earth.

'When all my endeavour is turned toward Thee because all Thy endeavour is turned toward me; when I look unto Thee alone with all my attention, nor ever turn aside the eyes of my mind, because Thou dost enfold me with Thy constant regard; when I direct my love toward Thee alone because Thou, who are Love's self hast turned Thee toward me alone. And what, Lord, is my life, save that embrace wherein Thy delightful sweetness doth so lovingly enfold me?' (So wrote Nicholas of Cusa four hundred years ago. Nicholas of Cusa, *The Vision of God*, E.P. Dutton & Co. Inc., New York, 1928. - This and the following quotations used by kind permission of the publishers.) I should like to say more about this old man of God. He is not much known today anywhere among Christian believers, and among current Fundamentalists he is known not at all. I feel that we could gain much from a little acquaintance with men of his spiritual flavor and the school of Christian thought which they represent. Christian literature, to be accepted and approved by the evangelical leaders of our times, must follow very closely the same train of thought, a kind of 'party line' from which it is scarcely safe to depart. A half-century of this in America has made us smug and content. We imitate each other with slavish devotion and our most strenuous efforts are put forth to try to say the same thing that everyone

around us is saying--and yet to find an excuse for saying it, some little safe variation on the approved theme or, if no more, at least a new illustration.

Nicholas was a true follower of Christ, a lover of the Lord, radiant and shining in his devotion to the Person of Jesus. His theology was orthodox, but fragrant and sweet as everything about Jesus might properly be expected to be. His conception of eternal life, for instance, is beautiful in itself and, if I mistake not, is nearer in spirit to John 17:3 than that which is current among us today. Life eternal, says Nicholas, is 'nought other than that blessed regard wherewith Thou never ceasest to behold me, yea, even the secret places of my soul. With Thee, to behold is to give life; 'tis unceasingly to impart sweetest love of Thee; 'tis to inflame me to love of Thee by love's imparting, and to feed me by inflaming, and by feeding to kindle my yearning, and by kindling to make me drink of the dew of gladness, and by drinking to infuse in me a fountain of life, and by infusing to make it increase and endure.' (The Vision of God)

Now, if faith is the gaze of the heart at God, and if this gaze is but the raising of the inward eyes to meet the all-seeing eyes of God, then it follows that it is one of the easiest things possible to do. It would be like God to make the most vital thing easy and place it within the range of possibility for the weakest and poorest of us. Several conclusions may fairly be drawn from all this. The simplicity of it, for instance. Since believing is looking, it can be done without special equipment or religious paraphernalia. God has seen to it that the one life-and-death essential can never be subject to the caprice of accident.

Equipment can break down or get lost, water can leak away, records can be destroyed by fire, the minister can be delayed or the church burn down. All these are external to the soul and subject to accident or mechanical failure: but looking is of the heart and can be done successfully by any man standing up or kneeling down or lying in his last agony a thousand miles from any church.

Since believing is looking it can be done any time. No season is superior to another season for this sweetest of all acts. God never made salvation depend upon new moons nor holy days or sabbaths. A man is not nearer to Christ on Easter Sunday than he is, say, on Saturday, August 3, or Monday, October 4. As long as Christ sits on the mediatorial throne every day is a good day and all days are days of salvation.

Neither does place matter in this blessed work of believing God. Lift your heart and let it rest upon Jesus and you are instantly in a sanctuary though it be a Pullman berth or a factory or a kitchen. You can see God from anywhere if your mind is set to love and obey Him.

Now, someone may ask, 'Is not this of which you speak for special persons such as monks or ministers who have by the nature of their calling more time to devote to quiet meditation? I am a busy worker and have little time to spend alone.' I am happy to say that the life I describe is for everyone of God's children regardless of calling. It is, in fact, happily practiced every day by many hardworking persons and is beyond the reach of none.

Many have found the secret of which I speak and, without giving much thought to what is going on within them, constantly practice this habit of inwardly gazing upon God. They know that something inside their hearts sees God. Even when they are compelled to withdraw their conscious attention in order to engage in earthly affairs, there is within them a secret communion always going on. Let their attention but be released for a moment from necessary business and it flies at once to God again. This has been the testimony of many Christians, so many that even as I state it thus I have a feeling that I am quoting, though from whom or from how many I cannot possibly know.

I do not want to leave the impression that the ordinary means of grace have no value. They most assuredly have. Private prayer should be practiced by every Christian. Long periods of Bible meditation will purify our gaze and direct it; church attendance will enlarge our outlook and increase our love for others. Service and work and activity; all are good and should be engaged in by every Christian. But at the bottom of all these things, giving meaning to them, will be the inward habit of beholding God. A new set of eyes (so to speak) will develop within us enabling us to be looking at God while our outward eyes are seeing the scenes of this passing world.

Someone may fear that we are magnifying private religion out of all proportion, that the 'us' of the New Testament is being displaced by a selfish 'I.' Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? they are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshippers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship. Social religion is perfected when private religion is purified. The body becomes stronger as its members become healthier. The whole Church of God gains when the members that compose it begin to seek a better and higher life.

All the foregoing presupposes true repentance and a full committal of the life to God. It is hardly necessary to mention this, for only persons who have made such a committal will have read this far. When the habit of inwardly gazing Godward becomes fixed within us we shall be ushered onto a new level of spiritual life more in keeping with the promises of God and the mood of the New Testament. The Triune God will be our dwelling place even while our feet walk the low road of simple duty here among men. We will have found life's *summum bonum** indeed. 'There is the source of all delights that can be desired; not only can nought better be thought out by men and angels, but nought better can exist in any mode of being! For it is the absolute maximum of every rational desire, than which a greater cannot be.

(The Vision of God)

O Lord, I have heard a good word inviting me to look away to Thee and be satisfied. My heart longs to respond, but sin has clouded my vision till I see Thee but dimly. Be pleased to cleanse me in Thine own precious blood, and make me inwardly pure, so that I may with unveiled eyes gaze upon Thee all the days of my earthly pilgrimage. Then shall I be prepared to behold Thee in full splendor in the day when Thou shalt appear to be glorified in Thy saints and admired in all them that believe. Amen.

**Summum bonum* is a Latin expression meaning "the highest good", which was introduced by Cicero, to correspond to the Idea of the Good in Greek philosophy. The *summum bonum* is generally thought of as being an end in itself, and at the same time as containing all other goods. The term was used in medieval philosophy and in Kantianism, to describe the ultimate importance, the singular and overriding end which human beings ought to pursue; while in the Thomist synthesis of Aristotelianism and Christianity, the highest good is usually defined as the life of the righteous, the life led in Communion with God and according to God's precepts.

Grace Fellowship International

Grace Notes:

Looking Unto Jesus

By Theodore Monod

["Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, LOOKING UNTO JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1,2)]

Only three words, but in those three words is the whole secret of life.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS in the Scriptures, to learn there what He is, what He has done, what He gives, what He desires; to find in His character our pattern, in His teachings our instruction, in His precepts our law, in His promises our support, in His person and in His work a full satisfaction provided for every need of our souls.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS Crucified, to find in His shed blood our ransom, our pardon, our peace.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS Risen, to find in Him the righteousness which alone makes us righteous, and permits us, all unworthy as we are, to draw near with boldness, in His Name, to Him Who is His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS Glorified, to find in Him our Heavenly Advocate completing by His intercession the work inspired by His loving kindness for our salvation (1 John 2:1); Who even now is appearing for us before the face of God (Hebrews 9:24), the kingly Priest, the spotless Victim, continually bearing the iniquity of our holy things (Exodus 28:38).

LOOKING UNTO JESUS revealed by the Holy Spirit, to find in constant communion with Him the cleansing of our sin-stained hearts, the illumination of our darkened spirits, the transformation of our rebel wills; enabled by Him to triumph over all attacks of the world and of the evil one, resisting their violence by Jesus our Strength, and overcoming their subtlety by Jesus our Wisdom; upheld by the sympathy of Jesus, Who was spared no temptation, and by the help of Jesus, Who yielded to none...

LOOKING UNTO JESUS to receive from Him the task and the cross for each day, with the grace which is sufficient to carry the cross and to accomplish the task; the grace that enables us to be patient with His patience, active with His activity, loving with His love; never asking "What am I able for?" but rather: "What is he not able for?" and waiting for His strength which is made perfect in our weakness. (2 Corinthians 2:19)...

LOOKING UNTO JESUS and at nothing else..., which at the same time directs us to fix our gaze upon Him, and to turn it away from everything else.

UNTO JESUS and not at ourselves, our thoughts, our reasonings, our imaginings, our inclinations, our wishes, our plans;

UNTO JESUS and not at the world, its customs, its example, its rules, its judgments...

UNTO JESUS and not at our brethren, not even to the best among them and the best beloved. In following a man we run the risk of losing our way; in following Jesus we are sure of never losing our way. Besides, in putting a man between Jesus and ourselves, it will come to pass that insensibly the man will increase and Jesus will decrease; soon we no longer know how to find Jesus when we cannot find the man, and if he fails us, all fails. On the contrary, if Jesus is kept between us and our closest friend, our attachment to the person will be at the same time less enthralling and more deep; less passionate and more tender; less necessary, and more useful; an instrument of rich blessing in the hands of God when He is pleased to make use of him; and whose absence will be a further blessing, when it may please God to dispense with him, to draw us even nearer to the only Friend who can be separated from us by "neither death nor life" (Romans 8:38-39)...

UNTO JESUS and not at the obstacles which meet us in our path. As soon as we stop to consider them, they amaze us, they confuse us, they overwhelm us, incapable as we are of understanding either the reason why they are permitted, or the means by which we may overcome them. The apostle began to sink as soon as he turned to look at the waves tossed by the storm; it was while he was looking at Jesus that he walked on the waters as on a rock. The more difficult our task, the more terrifying our temptations, the more essential it is that we look only at Jesus...

UNTO JESUS and not at our strength. Our strength is good only to glorify ourselves; to glorify God one must have the strength of God.

UNTO JESUS and not at weakness. By lamenting our weakness have we ever become more strong? Let us look to Jesus, and His strength will communicate itself to our hearts, His praise will break forth from our lips...

UNTO JESUS and not at what we are doing for Him. Too much occupied with our work, we can forget our Master - it is possible to have the hands full and the heart empty. When occupied with our Master, we cannot forget our work; if the heart is filled with His love, how can the hands fail to be active in His service?...

UNTO JESUS and not at our defeats or victories. If we look at our defeats we shall be cast down; if we look at our victories we shall be puffed up. And neither will help us to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12). Like all our blessings, the victory, with the faith which wins it, is the gift of God though our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:57) and to Him is all the glory...

LOOKING UNTO JESUS as long as we remain on the earth, -- unto Jesus from moment to moment, without allowing ourselves to be distracted by memories of a past which we should leave behind us, nor by occupation with a future of which we know nothing.

UNTO JESUS NOW, if we have never looked unto Him, --

UNTO JESUS AFRESH, if we have ceased doing so, --

UNTO JESUS ONLY,

UNTO JESUS STILL,

UNTO JESUS ALWAYS, with a gaze and more constant, more and more confident, "changed into the same image from glory to glory". (2 Corinthians 3:18) and thus awaiting the hour when he will call us to pass from earth to Heaven, and from time to eternity, -- The promised hour, the blessed hour when at last "we shall see Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John. 3:2).

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Suffering, The Pathway of Glory

This transition into Christ as the sphere of life, is sometimes imperceptible and sometimes a crisis. The soul seems to be emerging from the tomb into a new world of which it has hitherto had but glimpses, and now it understands His word, "Ye in Me."

Jessie Penn-Lewis

Week 10 of 11

Well of Life Ministries

Altha Burts

Suffering: The Pathway of Glory

Thank you, Janet. How many of you have come to appreciate more deeply the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit during this study? So have I!

Did you know that the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Glory? Turn with me to I Peter 4:14.

“If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.”

Listen to what R.A. Torrey says about the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of glory.

“This name does not merely teach that the Holy Spirit is infinitely glorious (yet He is that) but rather it teaches as the Spirit of glory He imparts the glory of Christ to us... (John 16:14).

Just as the Spirit of truth imparts truth to us (John 14:17), as the Spirit of life He imparts life to us (Rom 8:2). As the Spirit of wisdom and understanding and of counsel and might and knowledge and the fear of the Lord He imparts to us –

- wisdom
- and understanding
- and counsel
- and might
- and knowledge
- and the fear of the Lord (Isaiah 11:2).

Just as the Spirit of grace applies and administers to us the manifold grace of God (John 1:16), so the Spirit of glory is the Administrator to us of Christ's glory (2 Corinthians 3:17). What a powerful ministry He has!

We might ask ourselves, “But what is the pathway unto this glory - how do I position myself to receive?” We find the answer to this question in the immediately preceding verse, 1 Peter 4:13:

“...but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy...”

So we find suffering is the gateway to glory! But is it suffering in and of itself? Or is it how we *position* ourselves during the suffering that facilitates the impartation of His glory? Bringing us into a fuller union with Himself. In other words, is there a condition of any kind to receiving? Yes!

We are told in scripture to rejoice during trials and this is one way that keeps us *positioned* to receive. If we grumble, do we receive? No! If we are complaining, do we receive? No! The position which lends itself to receiving is rejoicing during trials - keeping a *posture* of faith! Do we rejoice because it feels good? No!

Then why are we told to rejoice? Because as we are rejoicing during the trial we are being prepared to receive a fresh impartation of the Lord's life... the Lord's glory!

Now let's read *1 Peter 4:12-14 NKJV* and we will see how this all comes together.

¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you...

As we have come to see clearly the Holy Spirit is the Administrator (the executive arm of the Trinity) of the Lord's glory; and suffering is the gateway unto glory. Is this not how it was for the Lord!

"...who for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

We see Jesus for the suffering of death, now crowned with glory and honor! We want to be believers who have the *Spirit of glory* resting upon us so that when people leave our presence they will not say, "What a wonderful person she is (or he is), but what a glorious Lord we have!"

Let's worship our glorious Lord and lift Him up for His name is holy!

For Further Reflection:

THE WORD OF THE CROSS

The Pathway to Life in God

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

THROUGH DEATH TO LIFE

from The Christ Life

By A.B. Simpson

FOES BARRING THE WAY TO THE THRONE

from The Enthroned Christian

By F. J Huegel

THE PATHWAY TO LIFE IN GOD

by Jessie Penn-Lewis

The Word of the Cross

“The word of God is living, and active and sharper than any two edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit” (Hebrews 4:12).

The Spirit works through the Word of God. The thought in the original of this passage suggests a sacrificial knife. The whole being given up to God, and sealed by the indwelling of His Divine Spirit, must be dealt with through and through. His Word must pierce to the dividing of the soul and spirit.

The Holy Spirit reveals to us the earthy life, as we are able to bear it, and as He does so, to our dismay, we discover how much of our own life has been mingled with what we thought purely “spiritual.” He shows us the corruption of all that springs from this source, the uselessness of all our “creaturely activity” in the service of God, all human “push and go”.

He drains us of all our power, strength, wisdom and knowledge. We once thought we were capable, and had “gifts” that he could use; now failure is over all. “Ichabod” seems written upon the work of God in which we glorified, blight is upon it and we cry, “I have spent my strength for naught.”

In addition, our emotional life seems gone, and we are aghast at our “hardness.” We think we are back-sliding and seem powerless to help it; everything appears unreal to ourselves, as almost think we are hypocrites; we would fly from our work, if we dared.

Yes, this is the pathway to the life wholly centered upon God - all must go to death, even our live which craves for response, to make room for God, and for His love, which loves without response, and is pure an unselfish.

The Spirit also unveils another form of the life of nature in spiritual things, which for most is subtle. We may call it “consecrated self” – self with its riches of past experience, its nervous anxiety for God’s glory, its “trembling for the ark”, its desires for success, its seeking to be the greatest in God’s kingdom, its craving after signs and experiences. Its ceaseless cry is “Bless *me* bless *me*, O Lord”; it runs after spiritual enjoyment in meetings; it criticizes God’s messengers; it looks down upon others not at its own point of spiritual experience; it talks over “where other people are” spiritually; it forces “truth” before souls are able to bear it; and it under-values the work of God in earlier degrees.

Let us note the change: once it was *self for self*; now it is *self for God*.

The Divine Spirit deals with this subtle form of the soulish life by (apparently) withdrawing all the spiritual riches once given - power in prayer, love for souls, grasp of the promises, consciousness of God’s presence. He permits failure through trifles which once did not touch us; and allows the self-hood, with all its peculiar personal characteristics, to stand forth in our sight in all its hideous loathsomeness. All these things were visible to *Him* but they were hidden from us, whilst we were occupied with our *heart* experience of His gracious Presence and power.

At last we know ourselves. We struggle to regain our old footing, but all seems in vain and we are in despair. The stripping is vividly pictured in Job 19: 6-21, and the cry of the soul in its bitter anguish in Psalm 88.

The attitude of the soul during this time

“Though He slay me, yet will I wait for Him” (Job 13:15).

“He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

Along this path of stripping, we must, by faith, ceaselessly turn to the finish work of Christ upon the Cross of Calvary, with a steadfast yielding to the Divine Spirit to set us free. “If by the Spirit *ye make to die the doings* of the body, ye shall live.” (Romans 8:13, 14, m.)

The Holy Spirit is able to work very rapidly in a *yielded* soul; in one who will now swerve from abandonment; in one who will walk blindfold with God, and say “Yes” all the way, counting all things loss to be “*found in Him*” (Philippians 3:9), pressing on – on – on - ON to know *Him*.

CALVARY The grave of Christ

“He that is entered into His rest hath himself also rested from his works” (Hebrews 4:10).

“We were buried ... with Him through baptism into death” (Roman 6:4).

“United with Him by the likeness of His death” (Romans 6:5)

The Spirit has brought the soul to such a sense of powerlessness and nothingness that it can only say “Thou hast brought me into the dust of death” (Psalm 22:15). Fresh light is thrown upon the grave of Christ, and we see that we not only been crucified with Him, having died to sin, but that we have been brought to an end of ourselves in His tomb.

The Spirit reveals a yet deeper meaning in the Cross of Calvary. The “word of the Cross” was the power of God unto salvation from the bondage of sin’ it is again the energy of God to the soul who has ceased from itself, and its own works. Anchoring upon the faithful God, the soul has nothing to ask for itself, nothing to say but “Father glorify Thy Name.” It fears the activity of its own life, and sees so clearly its comeliness to be corruption. It must now lie still in the hand of God, truly wrecked upon Him.

A Note of Warning

Here let us note some dangers to the soul at every stage of the Spiritual life:

1. Watching the experience.

God does not deal with all in exactly the same way; the work has to be done, and He has a thousand ways of doing it; resistance only brings keen suffering, as well as the pain of powerlessness.

2. *Sitting in judgment on oneself.*

We must not look inwards for evidence of death. There can be no *consciousness* of death! Our faith is to rest upon Christ's death, upon our having been planted into His death, and our having died with Him.

3. *Self seeking to put self to death.*

This is only another form of self-effort, which produces a morbid self-dissecting that hinders the Spirit in His work. We are to leave ourselves in the hand of God, and cist ourselves continually upon the Living Christ to work in us mightily.

4. *Self trying to "see" the "truth".*

This is an activity of the mind that must be yielded to God. We cannot "grasp" mentally what must be revealed by the 'spirit, and apprehended by faith. There is no form of creaturely activity that hinders more than this, and we can refuse to yield to the temptation of "wanting to see" the "truth".

5. *Self wanting another's experience.*

We must beware of preconceptions, based on the experience of others, of how the Holy Spirit will deal with us. He leads each soul individually, according to its need, character, temperament, etc. The more simple and child-like we are in placing ourselves in the hand of God, the more rapidly can the Spirit free us from our hindrances and reveal to us our habitation in the heart of our Father God.

Our "adversary the devil" will be on the alert to harass the soul in every possible way, whilst it is under the mighty hand of God. It is the special opportunity for him to excel as the "accuser of the brethren". He must be overcome by the "blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 12:11); by a steady testimony of faith in the Faithful God, and by a surrender, even unto death, of all that one's "own life" would cling to, though this be of spiritual experience.

I. "Christ ... our life" (Colossians 3:4)

"Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14, Conybeare). (See Galatians 3:27).

"If any man is IN Christ, there is a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new. But all things are of God" (2 Corinthians 5:17, 18, M.)

This transition into Christ as the sphere of life, is sometimes imperceptible and sometimes a crisis. The soul seems to be emerging from the tomb into a new world of which it has hitherto had but glimpses, and now it understands His word, "Ye *in Me*." (John 14:20)

The "cross is the gate of life" in every stage, but is not until we have surrendered our "own life" and activities to the grave of Christ, that we can truly say "old things have passed away; all things have become new".

Now the language of the heart is "*To me to live is Christ*", for He must be the source of life in every action that we may live by Him, as He lived by the Father.

The life established

“He that stablisheth us... unto Christ, and anointed us is God” (2 Corinthians 1:21, m.)

United to Christ, and clothed with Him, the spirit of faith so possesses the soul that the life of faith becomes as easy as breathing- it is *natural* for a child to trust its Father! The life of God in the soul will flow back into God in simple child-like faith. *There is now*: An effortless reckoning back to the Cross, and the grave of Christ, as the foundation of *continuous* deliverance from the old life. Now the soul can say:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life... I live in faith.” (Galatians 2:20)

The Holy Spirit now bears witness to the reckoning which is so different to the old *mental* reckoning. With intense reality we see the Cross of Christ severing us from ourselves and the past, so that the *accounting* it true is lost sight of in the knowledge that we are reckoning *what is true*, according to the Word of God. We may sin, and disobey the Indwelling Lord, but the cost is so bitter that we cry, “How can I?” We then fear nothing so much as to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. The soul also knows that it stands simply by faith- but it is “*the faith wrought in you by God.*” (Colossians 2:12, Conybeare)

A continuous dependence upon Christ as the Living One, not by effort or by definite acts of faith, so much as by a restful abiding in Him.

“It is no more that I live, but Christ is living in me: and my outward life which still remains, I live in the faith of the Son of God.” (Galatians 2:20, Conybeare)

I can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth me.” (Philippians 4:13) (*See* 2 Corinthians 13:3, Conybeare)

“I will speak only of the works which Christ has wrought by me...with the might of the Spirit of God.” (Romans 15:18, 19, Conybeare)

A thankful resting under the shelter of the blood sprinkled upon the Mercy-seat with a deep sense of its momentary need for unbroken communion.

“If we walk in the light as He is in the light... the blood of Jesus... cleanseth from all sin” (1 John 1:7).
“In sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood.” (1 Peter 1:2)

Only as we walk in the light of God, which is intensified day by day, can we really abide under the *power* of the cleansing blood. The soul may walk with a conscience void of offence, and know nothing against itself, yet it is not hereby justified. It never draws near in specific access to the Throne without reminding the Father of the sprinkled blood. In any conscious transgression there is the same instinctive instantaneous application to the fountain opened for sin, with *honest confession of sin*, and deep humiliation before the Father’s footstool.

A keen appetite for the written word as Spirit food for the new life.

“The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.” (John 6:63, A.V.)

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” (Colossians 3:16). (*See* John 15:7)

The Word of God is now spirit and life to the soul, as day by day it is unveiled in fresh beauty by its Author. It is illuminated with the light of the Spirit, and is truly the voice of God to the heart seeking to know Him. The soul is deeply conscious of the necessity of implicit obedience, and a sensitive walk in all the will of God.

An intense longing to press on to know the Lord and enter into all the deepest purposes of God.

“I count all things to be loss for the... knowledge of Christ.” (R.V.)

“I press onward, if indeed, I might lay hold on that, for which Christ also laid hold on me.”
(Philippians 3:8, 12, Conybeare)

“I hold not my life of any account... in comparison of accomplishing my course.” (Acts 20:24, m.)

The life of union with /Christ has been well described to be a series of ever advancing goals. As the soul presses on, the vision widens, and its cry grows deeper, *that I may know Him*”. There is no finality, and no *state* of experience to rest upon- short of the hour when we shall see the Glorified Lord face to face, and be like Him perfectly.

THROUGH DEATH TO LIFE

from The Christ Life

By A.B. Simpson

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me"
(Matt. 16:24)

Here lies the great difference between the world's gospel and the Lord's gospel. The world says, when it bids you good-bye, "Take care of yourself." The Lord says, "Let yourself go and take care of others and the glory of our God." The world says, "Have a good time, look out for number one." But the world gets left in the end and last comes first. The man that lets go gets all, and man who holds fast loses what he has, and the Lord's words come true- "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

So the law of sacrifice is the greatest law in the earth and heaven. The law of sacrifice is God's great law. It is written in earth and every department of nature. We tread on the skeletons of then thousand millions of generations that have lived and died that we might live. The very heart of the earth itself is the wreck of ages and the buried life of former generations. All nature dies and lives again, and each new development is a higher and larger life built on the wrecks of the former. A corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or else be shriveled-up seed, but as it dies it lives and multiplies, and grows into the beautiful spring, the golden autumn, and the multiplied sheaves. And so it is in the deeper life of the higher world, as you rise from the natural to the spiritual. Everything that is selfish is limited by its selfishness. The river that ceases to run becomes a stagnant pool, but as it flows it grows fresher, richer, fuller.

If we turn our natural eye upon self, we cannot see anything. It is as we look out that the vision of the world busts upon us. The very law of the natural life is love for others, caring for others by giving away and letting go. It is death and self destruction to be selfish.

The law of sacrifice is the law of God. God who lived in supreme self-sufficiency as the Father, Son and Holy Ghost gave Himself. God's glory was giving Himself, and so He gave Himself in the creation, in the beauty of the universe, so formed that every possible sort of happiness could come according to its natural law. And God gave Himself in Jesus Christ. "God so loved that word that he gave." He gave His best, gave His all, and gave His only begotten Son. The law of God is sacrifice. He loved until He gave ALL.

Then it is the law of Christ Himself. He came through God's sacrifice, and He came to sacrifice. He laid His honors down, left the society of heaven for a generation, and lived with creatures farther beneath Him than the groveling earthworm is beneath a man. He made Himself one of them, and became a brother of this fallen race. He was always yielding and letting go, always holding back His power and not using it. He was always being subject to the will of the men beneath Him, until at last they nailed Him to the cross. His whole life was a continual refusing of Himself, carrying their burdens and sharing their sorrows. And so love and sacrifice is the law of Christ. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. "The law of Christ is the bearing of other's burdens. The sharing of others' griefs, sacrificing yourself for another.

It is the laws of Christianity. It is the law of the saint. It is the only way to be saved. From the beginning it has always been so. It was so on Mt. Moriah where Abraham, the father of the faithful gave up his only child, the child of promise. It reached its climax on Mt. Calvary. All along, the way was marked by blood and sacrifice. Not only did Abraham give up his Isaac, but

Isaac gave up his life and all through his life he laid himself down for others. We know how Jacob served for his wife, and then didn't get the one of his choice. His was a suffering life, a passive life, a patient life. And so Joseph died to his circumstances. Because he was to rise so high, he must go down as low; down not only into banishment but into shameful imprisonment and almost into death. When Joseph was out of sight and all God's promises concerning him seemed lost, and his prospects seemed hopeless, then God picked him up and set him on the world's throne.

Moses had to be a fugitive. Moses had to try and then fail and for forty years God had to teach him and train him, and when at last Moses was out of sight, He gave him his desire. At the very last moment, Moses had to let go the prospect of entering the Promised Land. He died outside the gates of Canaan, sacrificed his most cherished hope and waited until the years should roll by and Jesus Himself should bring him in to stand with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration and say, "Now, Moses, you have the thing you let go, the thing you lost and died to; now you have a better resurrection." And so it was all through the past, Saul would not give up himself, would not destroy Agag and Amalek, types of the flesh. So Saul, head and shoulders above the people, all that a man could be, went down into the darkness, sank into obscurity and shame and perhaps perdition. There was Jonah, the man whom God honored to deliver His own people and lead His kingdom into victory and mighty power in the days of Jeroboam II, the man whom God honored to be the first foreign missionary, the man whom God picked up and sent to Assyria, and said, "go and preach to Nineveh, go bring the world to know and honor Me." God mightily blessed him. He blesses so mightily that in that city mightiest revival the world ever saw was consummated. Yet Jonah got angry because God did not kill all the people in Nineveh, and some compromised Jonah's reputation. Jonah had said that the people should die in forty days, but before the forty days were up the people repented of their sins and God repented of what He said and forgave them, and Jonah said "Where am I in this transaction? I will never be believed again. Why did you not destroy Nineveh and save my reputation? And because Jonah could not let his only glory go, God had to dishonor him and leave him under the withered gourd, a sort of scarecrow to show to all the generations how contemptible it is to seek one's won glory. I think there is no more shocking and ridiculous spectacle than that poor old prophet sitting under his withered gourd scolding God and begging to die just because God had dishonored him in fulfilling his mission in the repentance of the whole nation. And God just let him stand there as a spectacle of the shame and dishonor of selfishness.

The New Testament gives the story of Simon Peter's experience. The Master's last message to him when He restored him was: "when thou was young thou girdedst thyself and walkedst wither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee wither thou wouldest not." This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And Jesus sent him to a life of crucifixion to be yielded, submissive, surrendered and let about by others against his natural choice till at last he should be crucified with downward head upon his Master's cross.

The world says, look out for yourself; but Jesus says, "Not I, but Christ." Not only must the old self be crucified the new man with all his strength and self-confidence, too, must die. Not only Ishmael must go out an e an outcast, but Isaac must be yielded and not hold up his head again.

It is so easy to talk about this. The longer I live, the longer I know myself and friends, the more thoroughly I am satisfied that this is the secret of failure among Christians. Too many come a little way with Jesus but stop at Gethsemane and Calvary. They follow him in His ministry in

Galilee. The Sermon on the Mount was splendid morality. They loved the feeding of the thousands, and said, "What a blessed king he would make!" they would not have to work as they used to. But when He stood and talked about Calvary and the cross for them as well as for Himself, and how they must go with Him and go with Him all the way, they say, "This is a hard saying, who can bear it?" A few days later they said, "We do not understand Him; we thought He would be a king." They were not willing to go the cross.

This is where multitudes have stopped short. They have said yes to self and no to God, instead of saying no to self and yes to God. It is so much easier to talk of this truth than to live it. There is not use to talk about it unless the Holy Ghost shall ring it home to us. A writer once said that there are three baptisms to be baptized with. First, the baptism of repentance, when we turned from sin to God, Second, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, when we received the Holy Ghost to live in us. Third, the baptism into death, after the Holy Spirit comes in. While he perhaps has not scriptural authority for the precise distinction, there is no doubt that there are these three steps to take. After one receives the baptism of the Holy Ghost, after God comes to live in him, after the Holy Spirit makes the heart His home, then it is that he has to go with Christ into his own dying, and so he says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." And so He said about himself, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I strengthened until it is accomplished." I have a burial to be buried with. He was going out into deeper dying every day, and His heart was all pent up with it, until He went down to Gethsemane, down to Joseph's tomb, and down into Hades; and He passed through the regions of the dead and opened first the gates of heaven. That is what Jesus saw before Him after He was baptized on the banks of Jordan.

Oh beloved, who have received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, it is you who have to go down into His death. Now, I know that in a sense we took all that by faith when we consecrated ourselves to Christ, and we count it all real and God counts it all real; but, my dear friends, we have to through it step by step. I know God treats the believer as though it was accomplished, as though he were sitting yonder on the throne. But he must go through the narrow passage and the secret places of the stairs. There must be no fooling her. One may count it all done; but step by step it must be written on the records of the heart.

Now, my friends, what does all this mean? It is dying to self-will. After complete consecration to God there often comes a tug of war. The next morning the believer will have the most awful battle of his life. Just because he had given up his will, the devil wants him to take it back. Do not think it will be an Elysian field; no it will be a battlefield; battles with the dragon and the fiery darts. The devil will try to show how unreasonable consecration is, how right it is that one stand for his own will. It will be life or death perhaps for a week or for a month. Jesus went into the wilderness for forty days, and the devil tried to have him have His own will, but He stood the test. He let His own will go, "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of Him what sent me."

God could make Him a leader because He had been led. No man can govern until he has been governed. Joseph could not have been where he was in Egypt unless he had been set upon by the people and then he sat there a broken man and a lowly, humble spirit. His brothers came down to see him. The world would have said, "Make them feel how mean they were and how wicked." God said, "No, help them to forget it"; and so Joseph said, "Don't be angry or grieved with yourselves, God meant it for good." If Joseph had not been humbled, he would have been no good as Egypt's ruler. No man can lead until he has been led. David had to have nine years of training, it might have been better for him to have had nine more, and then he would not have

abused so shamefully his power when he got to the throne. Daniel in Babylon had to be disciplined by suffering before he could sit as Premier with Cyrus and Nebuchadnezzar. If God is going to make anything of you, let all your will go into His hands. You will find a good many tests after the first surrender, but these are just opportunities for allowing the work to be done.

Then comes self-indulgence, doing a thing because we like to do it. No man has a right to do a thing for the pleasure it affords, because he enjoys or likes it. I have no right to take my dinner just because I like it. This makes me a beast. I do it because it nourishes me. Doing things just because they please us is self-seeking and wrong. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." We have no divine warrant to seek ourselves in anything. Seek God, and God will seek your good. Take care of the things of God, because He will take care of you. Look not every man on his own things, but on the things of others.

There is self-complacency, dwelling on the work that one has done. How easy after performing some service or gaining some victory to think "How good." How quickly this runs into vain glory! How many are more interested in what people think and say of them than what they are themselves.

In the work of God there is nothing we need to so guard against as vanity. That was Jonah's curse. The seraphim covered their faces with their wings, they covered their feet with their wings. They covered their faces because they did not want to see their beauty, and their feet because they did not want to see their service, nor have anyone else see them. They used only two wings to fly. Take care how in putting temptation in another's way. It is all right to encourage works with a "God bless you." But don't praise. God does not say, "How beautiful, how eloquent, how lovely, how splendid!" That is putting on a human head the crown that belongs to Jesus. I want the Holy Ghost to enable me simply to do you good, but I do not want power to bring me the honor of the world. If I had it, I should feel it the greatest peril of my life. We have no more right to take Christ's honors here than we have to sit on Jesus' throne and let angels worship us. We have to be so careful when God uses us to bless human souls. There is a sweetness which is not of God. God save us from all these snares woven by the tempter.

Philip, as soon as he had led the eunuch to Jesus, got out of the eunuch's way. Beloved, there are subtle attachments that come between man and man, between woman and woman, and between man and woman. They seem sweet and right, but you need much of the Holy Ghost to keep your spirit pure. I am not talking hear of sinful love. Surely, it is not needful to speak of that. I am thinking of more subtle and refined attractions which are more dishonoring to God and more dangerous, because they are so pure. God keep us from every service, and every friendship, and every thought that is not in the Holy Ghost and not to the honor of Jesus alone.

Then there is self-confidence that feels its strength, spiritual or mental self-righteousness, power to be good or do good. God has to lead us to lay all that aside and realize our utter nothingness.

God is not pleased with sensitiveness of the self-life., that fine susceptibility of the feelings that are easily wounded, or that selfish desire one may have to be loved because one seeks affection. Divine loves that is may bless and do good. We ought to love, not because it pleases us, but because it blesses others. Paul could say, "...I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; thought he more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (II Cor. 12:15). He does not say, I will help you as long as you love me. No; I gladly spend my last drop of blood to bless you even when I know you don't appreciate me the least bit. That is what is the matter with you.

People hurt you, they don't appreciate you. Well, spend and be spent all the more when you are the less loved.

Time would fail to tell of selfish desires, covetousness, selfish motives, and selfish possession, that give the believer loads of trouble, and worry, just because he insists on owning them. There are selfish sorrows. I know of nothing more selfish than the tears we shed for our own sorrows. When God saw Israel weeping he was angry and said "You have polluted my altar with your tears." You are weeping because you have not better bread. You are weeping because something else is dearer to you than Christ. You are weeping because you are not altogether pleased or gratified.

Our sacrifices and self-denials may be selfish. Yes, even one's claim to sanctification may be selfish. A sarcastic friend said of a person that testified about their sinlessness, "Poor old soul, she committed the biggest sin of her life for she told the biggest lie." Self can get up and pray and sit down and say, "What a lovely prayer." Self can preach a sermon and save souls and go home, pat itself on the back and say, or let the devil say through him, "You did splendidly! What a useful man you are!" Self can be burned to death and be proud of its fortitude. Yes, we can have religious selfishness as well as carnal selfishness.

How can we get rid of this? Only by seeing the danger of sin can victory be maintained. Face the sin frankly and determine that it must go. The world of it's that it deceives us so. It says, "How that fits somebody else, not me." Man applies the truth to others and do not apply it to their own life. One must pass the sentence of death on it or else it will pass sentence on him. Sin is like the serpent with beautiful spots on it like jewels but has the sting of death in it.

May God expose everything in us that will not stand the searching flames. Let us not have a bigger gasp than we have a life. Having passed sentence of death upon self take Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to do the work. Don't try to fight it.

Then when the test comes and God lets us out to meet the test, let us be true. The test will often come in the very area of the self-life where the victory was won. When the battle comes, forget self; don't defend it but say, "Lord keep me." Perhaps someone will try to provoke us. Perhaps someone will try to praise us. Just say, "Yes, the Lord let you come to see if we wanted to be appreciated." The Holy Spirit is able to take everything we dare to give and gives everything we dare to take. "He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless." Ah a blessed exchange it will be! Take the cross and we shall someday wear the crown, sit upon the throne, and all that he is we shall be, and all that He has we shall share.

FOES BARRING THE WAY TO THE THRONE

from The Enthroned Christian

By F. J Huegel

There may well be those who will think that what I wrote in Chapter 6 I am now reversing in Chapter 7. I have stated the way to the Enthroned Life is “easy”; now I am going to say that it is fraught with great difficulties. There is a ready answer in the history of Israel which resolves this seeming contradiction. The Promised Land, which flowed with milk and honey, beautiful and rich beyond compare, was given to God’s chosen people. “Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon have I given you...” – thus spoke the Lord to Israel’s leader, Joshua. Israel was commanded to enter in and possess the land which by divine decree, confirmed in heaven, had been given to her. It was hers as the gift of God, sealed by His holy word. But that did not alter the fact that Israel had to fight. The Canaanites had to be driven out of their strongholds. The giant sons of Anak had to be overthrown, Jericho had to be besieged, and her mighty walls leveled. Jabin’s nine hundred iron chariots had to be destroyed, and the veteran warriors who drove them slain.

It is well that we must fight, for Christian character can be achieved in no other way. God is forging men after his own heart and we must arise as did Joshua, to be strong and of good courage. We must be Calebs, of whom it was said that he “followed the Lord wholly,” and who, when the people quailed and turned back in fear, rebelling against the Lord, cried out: ‘If the Lord delights in us, the He will bring us into this land and give it to us... do not fear the people of the land, for they are our bread... the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.’ Yes! We must be strong and very courageous, not turning from God’s Word to the right hand or to the left. The flooding rivers will divide, Jerichos will fall, the giants of the land be routed, the kings will be brought out of their caves and hiding places. But we must do our part. We must put our feet upon the necks of these kings. We must enter in and possess the land. It is ours by a decree of God. The throne is ours because it is Christ’s and we are His, purchased with a great price. With Him we were raised up and made to sit together in heavenly places.

Indeed, it is both easy and hard to enter the land. There are giants to be overcome. *The way to the Throne is contested by principalities and powers.* We wrestle not against flesh and blood, as Paul reminds us in his Ephesians epistle, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places.

Is it not significant that Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, where the Throne-privileges of the church are the central theme, should close with a call to war? “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.” I say, such a close to the Ephesians epistle with its call to Throne Life, so sublimely given, is surprising indeed. Why battle? Why not peace? Why warfare? Why not joy unspeakable and full of glory? The reason is simple enough” there is no position occupied by the Christian which so enrages Satan and his hosts as that of the Enthroned Life. To counteract the effect of the believer taking such a position, the devil will mobilize ten thousand demons and declare war; for as we shall see in succeeding chapters, this life of union with the reigning Lord brings with it an equipping of divine authority before which the rulers of the darkness of this world cannot stand. To the enthroned Christian power is given over all the power of the enemy; he speaks, and mountains of satanic oppression are cast into the sea. Hence the opposition- all hell moves against the believer’s appropriation of his Throne-rights and privileges. But of this more later.

The point I wish to make now is that the initial step of the believer wholly given to his Lord, determined to enter into the Enthroned Life of union with his Savior in the power of His resurrection and ascension, will certainly lead him into trial, uncertainty, and conflict. At first it may seem to him that he is worse off than he was before. Instead of more light he may be oppressed by the darkness of the pit. Floods of accusation may pour upon him. Where before his position as a Christian was secure, now all seems open to terrible doubts. Fiery darts of the Wicked One assail him. The foundations of his being are shaken. He could wish, as did Israel that he had remained where he was on the other side of Jordan.

All this will be turned to good account. He must, as the great mystics of the Church were in habit of saying, “enter into his nothingness.” Jesus the Lord must be his All. He must learn to love the Lord for Himself alone. The knife of the cross must be applied as never before to the pride which is natural to “flesh-life.”

All testing of our faith is good. If now the believer by sheer “naked faith” will but hold to his position, though the lion roar, and though absolutely nothing with he had imagined such a position would bring seems real... if, when mighty Jerichos of opposition loom up before him, the believer will hold his position of union with Christ of His Throne by naked faith, and praise God that it is all real – real because God who cannot lie saith it is so, real though then thousand circumstances and feelings thunder and say that it is not – he will soon emerge as does the pilot of an air plane who has found his way through a storm and has come into the clear sunlight of the skies. He will experience a liberation of spirit never know before. Circumstances which before overwhelmed him will be under his feet. The enemy- who before, all unknown to him, held ground in his life and oppressed him- will flee from the field of battle. He will find himself equipped with powers he never dreamed were possible to the Christian. A new universe will come into being. Naturally, he will not come into the possession of Throne-rights and powers without also Throne-graces. The fight will now be on a higher plane. The murmurings and defeats because of “the flesh”- so characteristic of life prior to crossing Jordan- the wanderings, the fruits of “self-life,” now cease. The spirit is released. The “flesh,” will not only say *was*, but *is* crucified with Christ; for Throne Life cannot be maintained without a constant application of what Andrew Murray called the “cauterizing power of the cross.” Now, the efficacy of Christian testimony, service and ministry (I am thinking of the ministry to which all Christians are called) is multiplied a thousand times.

But it must not be thought that this crisis, once passed, will not be repeated. And nothing else which the Christian faith represents, the devil is out to defeat any manifestation of the Enthroned Life. He will leave no stone unturned. The only real menace to his authority, which is often maintained in spite of the trappings of ‘Churchianity’- as it is to a great degree wherever “flesh life” is left “uncrucified,” and through hundreds of “counterfeits” which for want of perception pass for genuine Christian experience – the only real menace to the devil’s authority, I repeat, is the authority of the enthroned life. He knows it and brings all his engines of war to bear upon this one point.

Yes! The believer, who by faith in the Word of god takes his position with his Lord as one made to sit in heavenly places, must be prepared for battle. Even after years in the enjoyment of such a life he may, like Israel (always a faithful type of Christian experience) when deceived by the Gibeonites, suffered a severe defeat. He must be watchful. The enemy will strike in ways adapted to his exalted position. “The flesh” is dead only as by faith there are ever fresh

appropriations of the “the radium of Calvary.” It is a process which must run parallel with Throne-power, else the latter will vitiated , and there will be coming down from the throne- a sinking down into what has been called “the vessel of soul,” and consequent advantage given to Satan which he will not lose a second in seizing. John saw on the Throne “as Lamb as though it has been slain”” we cannot in spirit be with Jesus on the Throne except we share His Lambhood nature, and are conformed to His death.

[illegible]

Rivers of Living Water

Divine fullness is only going to be reached by a progressive and ever increasing revelation of Christ and His significance. Such a revelation - unless we misunderstand the record of God's ways from old - comes firstly by an apprehended instrument which is taken into the deeps with God: then it is given forth as His truth to His people and them it becomes the inwrought experience and knowledge of such as really mean business with God - not as their blessing, but as to His purpose and inheritance in them.

T. Austin-Sparks

Week 11 of 11

Well of Life Ministries

Altha Burts

Rivers of Living Water

Open your Bibles with me this evening to John 7:37.

³⁷*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink."*

³⁸*He who believes on Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."*

³⁹*But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

John 7:37-39

I'd like to share with you this evening insights that I have gleaned from Andrew Murray on this passage which has had a profound effect on my life! They were his insights, and by the Holy Spirit they became my own treasures as well. Here in this passage, our Lord promises that those who come unto Him and drink, who believe on Him, will not only never thirst, but will *themselves become fountains*, from which will flow streams of living water of life and blessing.

As John records these words, he explains that the promise was a prospective one that would have to wait for its fulfillment – till the Spirit would be poured out. He also gave the double reason for this delay: "*The Holy Spirit was **not yet** given; because Jesus was **not yet** glorified.*" As Murray brings out - the expression "*the Spirit was not yet*" appeared strange, so the word *given* has been inserted (it is in italics in your Bible). He continues to say, "...the expression, if accepted as it stands, may guide us into the true understanding of the real significance of the Spirit's not coming until Jesus was glorified."

I believe as we follow this reasoning we will discover a wonderful truth which will ready us for the rivers of living water to flow. These last few months, we have come to see that the Son, who had been with the Father in eternity past, entered into a new stage of existence when He became flesh. When He returned to heaven, He was still the same only begotten Son of God, and yet not altogether the same. He was now also Son of Man, the Firstborn from the dead...the First delivered out of the fall or separation clothed with the glorified humanity which He had perfected and sanctified for Himself.

"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death." Revelation 1:18

He became head over all things. We now see Jesus crowned with honor and glory. Likewise scripture teaches that the Spirit of God poured out at Pentecost is indeed something *new*. Through the Old Testament, He was always called the Spirit of God or the Spirit of the LORD; the name *Holy Spirit* He did not yet bear as His own proper name. It is only in connection with the work He has to do in the preparing the way for Christ and a body for Him, that the proper name comes into use. (Luke 1:15; 35)

Something very profound took place at Pentecost and when it is revealed to us personally it will have a life changing effect upon us. When the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, He came *as the Spirit of the glorified Jesus*, the Spirit of the incarnate, crucified, and exalted Christ, the Bearer and Communicator to us not of the life of God as such, but of ‘that life’ as it had been interwoven into human nature in the Person of Christ Jesus. It is in this capacity especially that the Spirit bears the name of the *Holy Spirit*.

As our reasoning continues, and from The Spirit of Christ by Andrew Murray:

“This thought opens to us further why it is not the Spirit of God as such, but the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, that has come to dwell within us. Sin had not only disturbed our relation to God’s law, but to God Himself; because of the Fall, we lost divine life. So in the fullness of time Christ came not only to deliver man from the law and its curse, but to bring human nature itself again into the fellowship of the divine life, to make us partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Peter 1:4)

We know that Jesus did not do this by an exercise of divine power on man, but in the path of a free, moral and most real human development. In His own Person, having become flesh (John 1:14), He sanctified His flesh and made it a fit and a willing receptacle for the dwelling of the Spirit of God. And He did this for us! [paraphrasing Murray]

“And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also may be sanctified...” (John 17:19)

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption - that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 1:30-31)

Having done this, (in accordance with the law that the lower form of life can rise to a higher only through decay and death), in death - both to bear the curse of sin and to give Himself as **The Grain of Wheat** - He died for us.

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” (John 12:24)

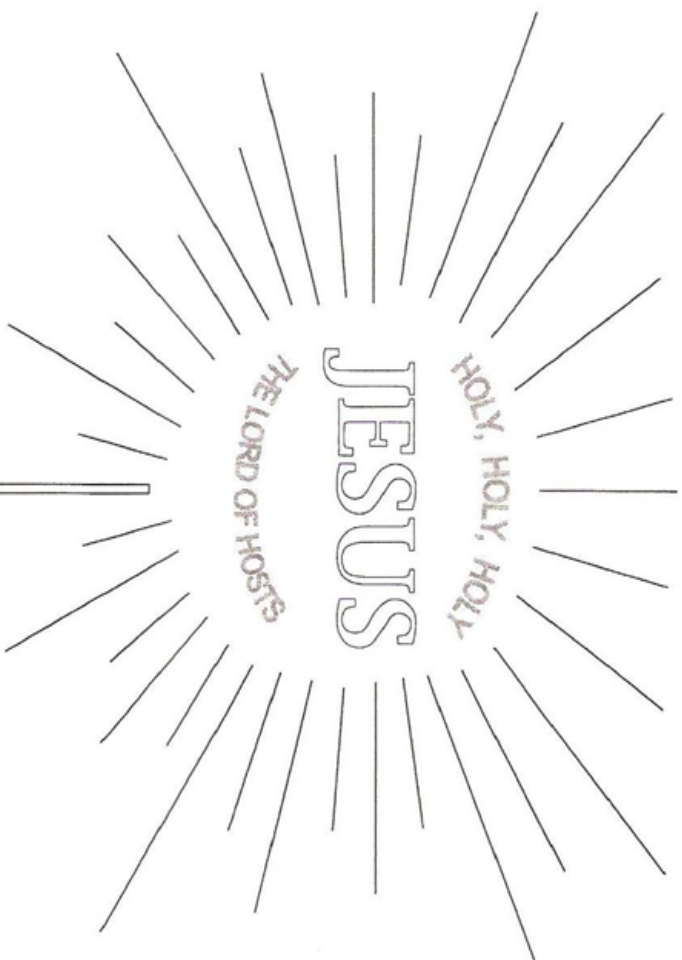
But He wasn’t left in death, was He! The Father resurrected and glorified Him, enthroned Him, in the third heaven!

“In virtue of His having perfected in Himself a new holy, human nature on our behalf, He could now communicate what previously had no existence - a life at once human and divine. From His nature as it was glorified in the resurrection and ascension, His own Spirit came forth as the Spirit of His human life, glorified into the union with the divine, to make us partakers of all that He had personally worked out and acquired of himself and His glorified life (Romans 6:4). There is *now* the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, who has come to indwell us as our very own life!” (Andrew Murray, The Spirit of Christ)

This is the mystery which was hid from ages and generations, but is now made known by the Holy Spirit...Christ *in* us...how He actually can live His glorified life in us who are in the flesh.

REVELATION OF THE INDWELLING CHRIST

"FOR THUS SAYS THE HIGH AND LOFTY ONE - HE WHO INHABITS ETERNITY, *WHOSE NAME IS HOLY*: I DWELL IN THE HIGH AND HOLY PLACE. BUT WITH HIM ALSO WHO IS OF A THOROUGHLY REPENTANT AND HUMBLE SPIRIT." ISA 57:15



"Christ in me the
Hope of (realizing
the) glory."
Colossians 1:27

Jesus says... "The person who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who (really) loves Me; and whoever really loves Me will be loved by My Father and I (too) will love him and will show (reveal, manifest) Myself to him. (I will let Myself be clearly seen by him and make Myself real to him.)

**"I AM the same yesterday, today, and forever... I AM the Lord of Hosts!"
Holy, Holy, Holy is My Name!**

“Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.” (Acts 2:33)

“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” (Revelation 5:13)

It is as sitting on the throne of the divine glory, with all things put in subjection under His feet, that Jesus has been glorified in heaven. (Ephesians 1:20-22) But when the *Holy Spirit* glorifies Jesus *in* us, He reveals Him to us in His glory. He takes of the things of Christ and declares, discloses, transmits them to us. (John 16:14) It is not that He gives us a thought, or image, or vision of that glory as it is above us in heaven, but He shows it to us as a personal experience *and* possession. He makes us partake of it in our innermost being. He shows *Christ* as present in us. When the Holy Spirit does His perfect work and reveals the glorified Lord in us, the throne of His glory is *set up in our heart* and He rules over every enemy. We become *conscious* of the King residing *in* His temple - *in* our innermost being! We continue to confess to the end, that ‘in me’ (that is my flesh) dwelleth no good thing. **Yet** we are conscious of His holy presence indwelling us *and* He is King! And *as* we abide in Him - in the Lord of glory - His Power and His Reign rules!

The Spirit of the glorified Jesus has been poured forth and the promise can now be realized:

“He that believeth on Me, out of him shall flow rivers of living waters.” (John 7:38)

Now many theologians believe that this passage is not saying that the rivers of living water flow out of the believer, but they flow out of Christ into *and* out of the believer! This distinction is significant! And I personally agree with what they say. The passage ought to read, “And let him who believeth on Me drink, as the scriptures hath said, rivers from His (Christ’s) belly - His innermost being - shall flow, that believers may drink. Let him who believes on Me, drink!” Rivers from Christ’s own inner being will flow into and out of those who believe!

As Murray says, “In light of this interpretation, we can understand why we should have a focused personal interest in knowing and understanding what it means that Jesus is glorified, that human nature shares the life and glory of God, and that the Spirit was not yet because Jesus was not yet glorified. Not only because we will see Him in His glory, one day, face to face, but now even now, moment by moment we are to live in it and abide.”

The Holy Spirit is able to be to us just as much as we are willing to have of Him and of the life of the glorified Lord. The glorified Jesus is *the fountain* from which the Spirit or living water flows. The believer is the one who should receive and drink and outpour the Lord’s life to others! If any man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Rivers of living water...not brooks, not streams, but rivers! This gets our attention, doesn’t it? Oh, how we want rivers of *living water* to flow out of Him into us *and* out of us into the lives of others!

Because of our hunger, we are compelled to ask Him if there are conditions for the receiving of this promise. With receptive ears, we hear Him say...

- “Those who thirst will receive.” Now the word *thirst* here means the ardent, eager, famishing, keen and all-consuming craving and passion of the soul for complete union with God and the fullness of the Spirit.

“My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?” (Psalm 42:2)

“O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” (Psalm 63:1)

- Then we hear Him speak again to our hearts, “Those who come to Me will receive.” To *come* means the complete surrender of life to do the whole will of God as light is received.

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” (Isaiah 55:1)

- Then we hear His voice again! “Those who *drink* will receive.” This means the whole reception into one's life of the gifts, the fruit, and operations of the Spirit.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

And finally we hear Him say to us, *“Those who truly believe on Me as the scripture has said, will receive.”* So here we have discovered the key for receiving all of God's treasures of truth: believing on Him! *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes on Me out of My innermost being rivers will flow.”*

Let me end this series of teachings on beholding the glory of Jesus with a quote from Andrew Murray.

“There is an introspection in which the soul looks at its own thoughts, feelings, purposes to find the proof of grace and the ground of peace. This is unhealthy and not of faith; it turns the eye from Christ to self. But there is another turning inwardly which is one of the highest exercises of faith.

It is when, closing the eye to all it can see in itself, the soul seeks to realize in faith that there is in its inmost parts a new spirit, within which the Spirit of the glorified Christ now dwells. In this faith it unreservedly gives itself up to be renewed by the Spirit and yields every faculty of the soul to be sanctified and guided by this Spirit within. Without such consciousness of a temple within and its holy occupant residing, there cannot be the clear believing prayer or the confidence in the glorified Jesus to give the living streams from within.”

Jesus said, *“Did I not say to you if you believe you would see my glory?”* (John 11:40)

Let's leave this evening - this particular study - committed to forsaking all to find our life in another, the Lord of glory! Can you hear His call?

“Come up higher, church, and you will experience My glory!”

For Further Reflection:

THE WORK OF CHRIST

From Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible

By Myer Pearlman

HOW TO ABIDE

By A. B. Simpson

KNOWING THE DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE

By Myer Pearlman

The Work of Christ

Section 3. The ascension of Christ

The fact of the ascension is witnessed to by the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles. What is the meaning of this historical fact? What doctrines are based upon it? What are its practical values?

a. The Heavenly Christ. Jesus left the world because the time had come for Him to return to the Father. His departure was a “going up” as His entrance into the world had been a “coming down.” He who had descended now ascended where He was before. And as His entrance into the world was supernatural so was his departure.

Consider the manner of His departure. His appearances and disappearances after the resurrection had been instantaneous, the ascension was gradual- “while they beheld.” (Acts 1:9). It was followed by no fresh appearances in which the Lord appeared in their midst in Person to eat and drink with them; appearances of this kind ended with the ascension. It was a withdrawal once for all from earthly life which men live on this side of the grave. From now on the disciples must not think of Him as “Christ after the flesh,” that is living an earthly life, but as the glorified Christ living a heavenly life in the presence of God and contacting them through the Holy Spirit. Before the ascension the Master appeared, disappeared and re-appeared from time to time, in order to gradually wean them from dependence on visible and earthly contact with Him, and to accustom them to invisible, spiritual communion with Him.

b. The Exalted Christ. In one place Christ is described as “going up,” and in another as being “taken up.” The first represents Christ as entering the Father’s presence in His own will and right; the second lays the emphasis on the Father’s act by which He is exalted as the reward of His obedience unto death.

His slow ascent in full view of the disciples brought to them the realization that he was leaving His earthly life, and also made them eye-witnesses to His departure. But once out of their sight, the journey was completed by an act of will. Comments Dr. Swete:

“That instant all the glory of God shone about Him, and He was in heaven. The sight was not altogether new to Him; in the depth of His Divine consciousness the Son of man had memories of the glories which in His pre-incarnate life He had had with the Father “before the world was.” (John 17:5.) But the human soul of Christ up to the moment of the Ascension had no experience of the full vision of God which burst upon Him when he was taken up. This was the goal of His human life, the joy set before Him (Heb. 12:2); and in the moment of the Ascension it was attained.”

It was in view of His ascension and exaltation that Christ declared, “all power (authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” (Matt 28:18. Compare Eph. 1:20-23; 1 Pet. 3:22; Phil 2:9-11; Rev. 5:12. Quoting again from Dr. Swete:

“Nothing is done in that great unknown world, which we call heaven, without His initiating, guiding and determining authority. Processes inconceivable to our minds are being carried forward beyond the veil by agencies equally inconceivable. It is enough

for the Church to know that all which is been done there is done by the authority of her Lord.”

c. The Sovereign Christ. Christ ascended to a place of headship over all creatures. He is the “head of every man” (1 Cor. 11), the “head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:10); all the authorities of the unseen world as well as the world of men are under His control. 1 Pet. 3:22; Rom 14:9; Phil 2:10, 11. He possesses this universal sovereignty to be exercised for the good of the Church which is His body; God “put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church.” In a very special sense, therefore, Christ is the Head of the Church. This headship is manifested in two ways:

1. By the authority exercised by Him over the members of the Church. Paul uses the marriage relationship as an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Eph. 5:22-23. As the Church lives in subjection to Christ, so wives are to be in subjection to their husbands; as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, so husbands are to exercise their authority in the spirit of love and self sacrifice. The Church’s obedience to Christ is a willing mission; in like manner should the wife be obedient not only for conscience’ sake but out of love and reverence.

“For Christians the marriage bond has become a “mystery” (a truth with a Divine meaning), for it reveals the spiritual union between Christ and His Church; “authority on the part of Christ and His church; “authority on the part of Christ, subordination on the part of the church, love on both sides- love answering to love, to be crowned by the fullness of joy, when the union is consummated at the coming of the Lord.” (Swete)

A prominent characteristic of the early Church was the attitude of loving submission to Christ. “Jesus is Lord” was not only the statement of a creed but also the rule of life.

2. The ascended Christ is not only the ruling, directing Power of the Church, but also the source of its life and energy. As the vine is to the branches, so the head is to the body, so is the living Christ to His church. Although they had of the Church is in heaven, He is in the closest union with His Body on earth, the Holy Spirit being the bond of communication. Eph 4:15, 16; Col 2:19.

d. The Way-preparing Christ. The separation between Christ and the earthly Church begun at the ascension is not permanent; He ascended as a forerunner to prepare the way for them to follow Him. His promise was: “Where I am, there shall also my servant be.” John 12:26. The term “forerunner” is first applied to John the Baptist as the way-preparer of the Christ. Luke 1:76. As John prepared the way for Christ, so the Christ prepares the way for the Church. This hope is likened to “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the vail; wither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” Heb. 6:19, 20. Though tossed by the waves of testing and adversity, the soul of the faithful need not fear shipwreck, so long as their hope keeps a firm grip upon heavenly realities. In a spiritual sense the Church has already followed the glorified Christ; they have been made to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Ephes. 2:6. Through the Spirit believer ascend in heart and mind to their risen Lord; but there will be literal ascension corresponding to the ascension of Christ. 1Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor.15:52. This hope of the believer is of delusion, for already they feel the tug of the anchor chain- they are conscious of the drawing power of the glorified Christ. 1 Pet 1:8. With this hope Jesus comforted the disciples before His departure. John 14:1-3. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thess. 4:18.

e. The Interceding Christ. By virtue of His assuming our nature and dying for our sins, Jesus is a Mediator between God and man. 1 Tim. 2:5. But the Mediator is also an Intercessor, and intercession goes a step further than mediation. A mediator may bring two parties together and leave them to settle their difficulties; but an intercessor goes on to say a word on behalf of the person whose interest he appears. Intercession is an important ministry of the ascended Christ. Rom. 8:34. It forms the climax of His saving activities. He died for us; He rose for us; He ascended for us, and makes intercession for us. Rom. 8:34. Our hope is in a dead Christ, but in One who lives; and not merely in One who lives, but who lives and reigns with God. Christ's priesthood is eternal, therefore His intercession is permanent.

"He can therefore carry on to completion ("to the uttermost," Heb 7:25) every case He undertakes to defend, thus guaranteeing to those who approach God through his mediation entire restoration to the divine favor and blessing; indeed, to do this if the very purpose of His life in heaven; He ever lives for this end that He may intercede with God on their behalf. There can be no suspension of His intercessory work so long as the world lasts... for the intercession of the ascended Christ is not a prayer but a life. The New testament does not represent Him as a suppliant standing ever before the Father, and with outstretched arms, and with strong crying and tears, pleading our cause before the presence of a reluctant God; but as a throned Priest-King asking what He will from a Father who always hears and grants His request."-Swete

What are the main petitions of Christ in His intercessory ministry? The prayer in John 17 will suggest the answer. Similar to the office of mediator is that of advocate (in the Greek, "paraclete"). 1 John 2:1. An advocate or paraclete is one who is called to the help of a person in distress or necessity, to administer comfort to give advice and protection. Such was the Lord's relation to the disciples during the days of His flesh. But the ascended Christ is concerned also with the problem of sin. As Mediator, He gains access for us into God's presence; as Intercessor, He bears our petitions before God; As advocate, He meets the charges laid against us by the "accuser of the brethren" on the score of sin. For true Christians a life of habitual sin is out of the question (1 John 3:6); but isolated acts of sin are possible in the best of Christians and such occasions require the advocacy of the Christ. In 1 John 2:1,2 there are stated three considerations which give force to His advocacy: first, He is "with the Father," in God's presence; second, He is "the righteous," as such may be an atonement for others; third, He is "the propitiation for our sins." That is a sacrifice which secures God's favor by atoning for sin.

f. The Omnipresent Christ. John 14:12. While on earth Christ was limited to one place at a time and could not be in contact with each of His disciples all the same time. But by ascending to the powerhouse of the universe He was enabled to broadcast His power and Divine personality at all times and in all places and to all His disciples. Ascension to the throne of God gave Him not only omnipotence (Matt 28:18) but also omnipresence, making it possible for Him to fulfill the promise, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" Matt 18:20.

g. Conclusion. What are the practical values of the doctrine of the Ascension? (1) Consciousness of the ascended Christ, whom we look forward to seeing some day, is an incentive to holiness Col.3:1-4. The upward glance will counteract the downward pull. (2) The knowledge of the ascension makes for a right conception of the Church. Belief in a merely human Christ will cause people to regard the Church as merely a human society, useful for philanthropic and moral authority. On the other hand, a knowledge of the ascended Christ will result in the recognition of the Church as an organism, a supernatural organism deriving Divine life from its risen Head. (3) Consciousness of the ascended Christ will produce a right attitude

toward the world and worldly things. “For our conversation (literally, “citizenship”) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Phil 3:20. (4) Faith in the ascended Christ will inspire a deep sense of personal responsibility. Belief in the ascended Christ carries with it the knowledge that an account will have to be rendered to Him some day. Rom 14:7-9; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10. The sense of a responsibility to a Master in heaven acts as a deterrent to sin and an incentive to righteousness. Eph. 6:9. (5) With faith in the ascended Christ is connected the joyous and blessed hope of His returning. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.” John 14:3.

HOW TO ABIDE

By A. B. Simpson

“And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28).

It would seem as though John meant that only little children could abide in Him; that only when we get to be little can we know the Lord in His fullness; only when we cease from manly or womanly strength and become dependent can we know His strength as our support and stay, John counted himself among the little children, because he says, “we” when he addresses us. He was indeed a little child in spirit from the time Boanerges died, and John laid his head on Jesus’ breast to be strong and no more in himself, and to be seen no more apart from the enfolding arms of Jesus.

We have seen Christ in His personal glory’ we have seen what it is to be in Him and to have Him in us and now we want to have these impressions stereotyped, John says, “Little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence.”

How may we, the believer, maintain this abiding life? You have surrendered; you have given up your strength as well as your will; you have consented that henceforth He shall support your life. Like a true bride, you have given up our very person, your name, your independence, so that now He is to be your lord. Your very life is merged in Him, and He becomes your Head and your All in All. Now, beloved how is this to be maintained? He says we are to abide, and He will abide in some sense according to your abiding. “Abide in Me, and I in you.”

Live by the Moment

First, it must be a momentary life, not a current that flows in through its own momentum; but succession of little acts and habits. You have Him for the moment, and you have Him perfectly’ you are perfectly saved this moment; you are victorious the moment, and that which fills this moment is large enough fill the next, so that if you shall renew this fellowship every moment, you shall always abide in Him. Have you learned this? The failures in your life mostly come through lost moments, broken stitches, little interstices, cleavages in the rock where the drops of water trickle down and become a torrent. But if you lose no steps and no victories, you shall abide in constant triumph.

First, then, learn the secret, that you are not sanctified for all times so that there will be no more need for grace and victory’ but you have the grace for this moment and the next moment, and buy the time life is spent, you shall have had a whole ocean of his grace. It may be a very little trickling stream at first; but let it flow through every moment, and it shall become a boundless ocean before its course is done.

Definite Acts of Will

Next, this abiding must be established by a succession of definite acts of will and of real fixed, steadfast trust in Christ. It does not come as a spontaneous and irresistible impulse that carries you whether you will or not, but you have to begin by an act of trust, and you must repeat it until it becomes a habit. It is very important to realize this.

A great many think, when they get a blessing that it ought to sweep them on without further effort. It is not so. An act of will, an act of choice is the real half of spiritual life. One is saved from sin by actually choosing Jesus as his Savior; he is consecrated by definitely giving up himself and taking Christ for everything.

So beloved, we must keep the half fixed, and press on, moment by moment, still choosing to trust Christ and live by Him until at last it comes to be as natural as breathing. It is like a man rescued from drowning' when they take him from the water, respiration seems to be stopped. And when it returns, it is not spontaneous, but a succession of labored pumping; they breathe the air in and they breathe the air out, perhaps for half an hour' then an involuntary action is noticed, and nature comes and makes the act spontaneous;' and soon the man is breathing without effort.

But it came by a definite effort at first, and by and by it became spontaneous. So with Christ; if one would have this abiding in Him become spontaneous, he must make it a spiritual habit. The prophet speaks of the mind "stayed on God," and David says, "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord." We begin by determining, and we obey Him no matter what it costs' and by and by the habits are established.

The Law of Habit

Habit grows out of a succession of little acts. A habit comes full-grown into your life; it grows like the roots of a tree, like the fibers of the flesh, as the morsels of food are absorbed into your body. When a man goes steadily along in a course of life, it is likely that that course was established by the habit of years. The stenographer takes down words as fast as they are spoken. At first it is clumsily and slow work; but at length it becomes a habit, and now the stenographer does not have to stop and think how to make the characters; they come as naturally as words come to the lips. So it is with writing; we remember how painfully at first we had to hold the pen, but now dash off your signature, and it is always the same; our friends know it, our banker knows it' and it can be identified as ours. How did it come about' because for years we have made the same marks. This is the reason, beloved, that it pays to plod; the habit becomes at length a necessity, and is easier as it grows.

It is so with evil; it is easier for a man to go down the longer he does down, and it is easier for him to go up the longer he goes up. And so it is with looking to Jesus; it is like the movement of the eye-the lid moves instinctively and the Bible uses it as a figure of God's care. "Keep me as the apple of thine eye." Before the dust can hurt the eye, the little curtain falls over the tender eyeball. So one finds himself instinctively holding his tongue when he would have felt like talking. So he learns to discern the very sent of evil before it comes and in articulately breathe a prayer to heaven before the danger reaches him. Thus also will the habit of obedience be formed; it comes by doing steadily, persistently, and faithfully what the Lord would have us to do. He is putting us to school in these little trials, until He gets the habit confirmed, and obedience becomes easy and natural.

Self Repression

Again, if we would abide in Christ we must continually study to have no confidence in self. Self-repression must be ever the prime necessity of divine fullness and efficiency. How quickly one springs up on self-assertion when any emergency arises. He knows how easily it was for Peter to step forth with this sword drawn before he knows whether he was able to meet the foe or not. That which is done in sudden impulse, and results in weeks of regret. Take the Lord instead of impulse. It is only as we get out of the way of the Lord that He can use us.

And so, beloved, let us practice the repression of self and the suspending of our will court everything until we have looked to Him and said, "Lord what is Thy will? What is Thy thought about it?" When you have that, you and He are not at cross-purposes; and there is blessed harmony. Those who thus abide in Christ have the habit of reserve and quiet; they are not reckless talkers; they will not always have an opinion about everything, and they will not always know that they are going to do. They will be found holding back rash judgment, and walking softly with God, It is the head strong, impulsive spirit that keeps one from hearing and following the Lord.

Dependence

If we would abide in Christ we must remember that Christ has undertaken not only the emergencies of life, but everything; and so we must cultivate the habit of constant dependence on Him; falling back on Him and finding Him everywhere; recognizing that He has undertaken the business of our life, and there is not a difficulty that comes up, but he will carry us through if we let Him have His way, and just trust Him.

Recognizing His Presence

Again if you would abide in Christ you must cultivate the habit of always recognizing Him as near, in your heart of hearts, so that you need not try to find Him, reaching out to the distant heavens and wondering where He has gone. Right There may be no sense of God's presence, but just accept the fact that the Spirit is in you hart, and act accordingly. Bring everything to Him, and soon the consciousness will become real and delightful, Do not begin with feelings- begin with acting as though He were here. So, if you would abide in Christ, treat Him as if He were in you, and you in Him; ad He will respond to your trust, and honor your confidence.

God in Everything

To abide in Christ is to recognize that Christ is everything that come in life; and that everything that occurs in the course of Providence is in some sense connected with the will of god. They trying circumstances was not chance, something with Christ had noting to do, and which we can only protest and wonder how God can't let such tings be. We must believe that God led in it, and though the floods have lifted up their heads on high, yet God sits on the throne, and is mightier that the great sea billows and the noise of ma waters. We must believe that he will "cause the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder thereof will he restrain." We must say "God is our refuge ad strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and thought the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with swelling thereof" (Ps. 46-3).

Everything need not be regarded as the very best the one would chose, or the very best that God will ultimately bring about. It is allowed, either that God may show us His power to overcome it, or may tech us some lessons of holiness, trust tranquility, or courage. It is something that, under the circumstances, fits into God's purposes; and therefore, we are not to look for different circumstances, but to conquer in these already around us. We are not to run away and say, "I will abide in Christ when I get to where I want to be," but we must abide in Christ in the ship and the storm, as well as in the harbor of blessing. Recognize that everything in

permitted by God, and that He is able to make all things work together; and not only so, but to make us know they are for our good, and they are working out His purposes.

Watch the Outward Senses

Abiding in Christ requires being very watchful of the senses. Nothing so easily sets us wandering out into dangerous fields and by-path meadows as the senses of the body. Ho often our eyes will take us away! Walking down the street one finds a thousand tings to call him from a state of recollection. Some people's eyes are like spiders – they see behind and before and on every side. Solomon says, "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee." Letting the world in, no matter what door it comes, separates us from the presence of our Lord.

If we listen to one-hundredth part of the conversation even of Christians we will be thoroughly defiled; ad so you have to hold your ears, and your eyes, and live in a little circle. One ought not to manage half so many things ad he undertakes. This causes anxiety.

There is a little creature called the water spider, and it lives I the water, away down in the mud lake of the marsh. It just does down a few inches, and lives there all the time. It has a strange apparatus by which it is able to gather around itself a bubble of air a few times larger than its body. It goes t the surface and fills it with the air and goes down, and this little air bubble forms on atmosphere for it, and there it builds its nest and rears its young. Because of the principle that were the air is the water cannot enter, that spider is safe in its little home in the dark water all around it, as it would be as if it lived above in the car air. So we can get into our element and say there with Him, although ther is sin around us, and hell beneath us, and men are struggling and temped and sinning, we shall be as safe as the saints above, in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus.

Internal Prayer

Once more, if we would abide in Him, we must cultivate the habit of internal prayer, communing with God in the heart. We must know the meaning of such words as "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you." This habit of silent prayer, not in words, but in thought, is one of the mystics used -"recollection" it might be called a recollected spirit.

Vigilance

There is another word in connection with abiding' it is vigilance- being wide awake. It is the opposite of drifting. It is the spirit of holding, and being over on guard, and yet sweetly held by the Lord. Now this does not mean that you have to do all the holding and watching' you are to have your hand on the helm, and Christ will do the steering. It is like the brakes on the train- the brakeman only touches the lever and sets the current in motion; the engineer does not have to make the train go, he has only to turn the throttle. The Christina does not need to fight his battles. He has only to give the watchword and the powers of heaven follow it up if it is in the name of Jesus. So one may ever abide in fellowship and victory moment by moment, until at last Christ becomes the atmosphere of his very life.

Let God Lead

If you would abide in Christ, we must stop trying to have God help us, and fall into god's way and let Him lead. The believer must rid himself of the idea that he has chosen to serve Christ and Christ must help him. Rather he has come into Christ's way and He is carrying him because He cannot go any other way. I one gets on the bosom of the river, one has to go down the river; if one is in the bosom of God, one has to go with Him. When the life is surrendered to God, it will be as strong as omnipotence and as sweet as heaven.

The Unexpected

Perhaps, it is well to speak of the unexpected that may come. Sometimes the Lord lets sudden temptation sweep over us to put us on guard. When such things come into the life, take them as from Him, sent to put us on the alert- like the falling of an eyelash lets the eye know it is been threatened. The temptations spring often from our own heedlessness. When one is getting out of the way, the Lord permits the trial to let him know that he has been in the enemy's country. If we abide in Him, all evil will have to strike us through Him. Perhaps we were a little out of center and Christ let the enemy come to frighten us back to Him, just as the shepherd's dogs are sent to drive the lambs into the fold. A little fall is better than ultimately to meet with disaster.

Failures

But if, notwithstanding all his care, one makes a mistake, he should not despair. He should not say, "I have lost my blessing." "I have found this life impractical" but remember that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just t forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

How to Make God Real

God is not real to many people. He does not seem so real to that man as his difficult task; He does ne seem so real to that woman as her work and her trials; He does not seem so real to that sufferer as his sickness... how shall we make Him real? The best way I know is to take Him into the things that are real. The headache is real, Take Him into it, and he will be as real as the headache, and a good darn more, for He will be there when the headache is gone. That trial is real; it has burned itself into your life; God will more so. What washing and ironing are real' take God into your home, and he will be real. Christ is real when we link Him with our life.

So the banyan of trees grows. First its trunk and branches shoot up to heaven, and then the branches grow down to the go=round and become rooted in the earth., and by an by there are hundreds of branches interwoven and interlaced from the ground so that the storm an winds cannot disturb it and even the someone of the Indian ocean cannot tear it up. It is rooted and bound together by hundreds of interlacing roots and branches. And when God saves a soul He plants one branch, but when He comes to fill and sanctify and help in your difficulties, each is another branch'; and thus your life becomes rooted an bound t God by hundred fibers, and all the power of Hell cannot break that fellowship or separate you from his love.

*“Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me a Living Brighter reality more present to faith’s vision
keen than any outward object seen; more dear, more intimately nigh than in the
sweetest earthly tie. Nearer and nearer still to me Thou living, loving Savior be.
Brighter vision of Thy face, till life shall be transformed to love. A heaven below and a
haven above nearer and nearer still to me, Thou living, loving Savior be. Brighter the
vision of Thy face, till life shall be transformed to love, a heaven below and a haven
above.”*

[illegible]