



Yon Motley Crowd

—including My Conversion



... by ...

C. C. CROWSTON

**LOIZEAUX BROTHERS, BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT,
19 WEST 21st STREET
NEW YORK**

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--including My Conversion

BY C. C. CROWSTON

Author of "Songs in the Night;" "Meditations on the
Manifold Glories of Christ;" "Manifold Purposes in Incarnation;"
"Lucifer's Fall and Four Expulsions;" "The Devil's Playground;"
"The Sky Pilot;" " 'I believe God,' or, Religious Infidelity Flayed."

[[PRINTED
IN U.S.A.]]

LOIZEAUX BROTHERS, BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT,
19 WEST 21st STREET
NEW YORK

THE BIBLE TRUTH PRESS
19 West 21st St., New York



Printed in the United States
of America

FOREWORD

*This little book on its mission flies
To honor Him who left the skies
To save an undone race.
It asks the unsaved to receive
The One who grants a full reprieve
Through His abounding grace.
Then it beseeches saved ones too
To faithfully their way pursue
Till they behold His face.*

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Judas

No name in human ranks is associated with more odium, or more widely known in the annals of infamy of the unconverted than that of Judas. As far as the story of Jesus and His cross has gone, so far has Judas' name been heralded. The Betrayed and the betrayer are linked together in "eternal history." Multitudes who revel in the grossest forms of wickedness could neither be induced nor driven to betray a friend.

A traitor is abhorred by all,
On him man's hottest curses fall.

The very thought or mention of Judas sends a thrill of sorrowful contempt through the contemplative mind. Not a single redeeming feature is to be found in his character or career, except that the manner of his death shows that under the awful pressure of his crime his adamant heart yielded to remorse.

"A good name is better than precious ointment, but dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to stink."

cary to send forth a stinking savor." There are enough dead flies in the ointment of this child of perdition to send forth an odor of abhorrence to time's last hour. Nor is the odium in the least alleviated by the fact that "Judas" is the Greek form of Judah, which means praise. He had an admirable and significant name, but he has linked it with eternal execration.

Readers of Holy Writ have in all lands in numberless instances turned to its sacred pages to find names for their new-born sons, but who ever heard of parents naming their son Judas? Such would be hurling disgrace at themselves, and branding their offspring with shame. Even the most scurrilous mother of the under-world would not give her unwanted illegitimate son the name of the traitor.

Usually a man is known by the company he keeps, but Judas was an exception to the rule. He was known throughout "the glory of all lands" as a companion of Christ. For three years or more he was in better company than that of un-fallen angels, but alas—an eternal alas!—for the man who was more highly privileged than any other man that ever died in his sins! What should have been his gain was his loss, his light was his darkness, his blessing was his bane, for "where there is much given there is much required." Responsibility is commensurate with privilege.

"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (demon). Christ used strong language in thus speaking to the disciples with ref-

erence to Judas who was the willing servant of him who is "king over all the children of pride."

What searching of heart and burning of soul this declaration must have caused on the part of the eleven! Deep self-examination and keen introspection was doubtless the high tension experience of each one, as he sounded his inward being to see if he could find within him that which answered to the Saviour's awful affirmation. Doubtless too each one looked without, and scanned the past with memory's piercing eye to find if possible that which justified their Master's burning charge—uttered a curse, told a lie, or committed the unpardonable sin.

Such censoring of one's thoughts and ways is needful and salutary for the believer—yea, absolutely indispensable if he is to go on *with* and *for* God in happiness of soul and usefulness of service. Note carefully 2 Cor. 2: 3-5; 1 John 3: 20, 21; 1 Cor. 11: 28—34.

At the last Passover, on the night of the betrayal, they were probed again to their depths, as the Lord looked upon them and searchingly said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." No wonder "they looked one upon another" as they heard in these transfixing words the certainty that one of their number was shortly to be guilty of such wickedness, but their "beckoning to John" (who was reclining on the bosom of his Lord) to ask Him, "Who is it, Lord?" soon settled the distressing matter, for Jesus answering said, "He it is to whom I shall give the sop, when I have dipped." "Judas hav-

ing received the sop went immediately out, and it was night." It was night indeed for this poor willing tool of Satan—night in an infinitely deeper sense than that meant by the absence of the sun, for soon his guilty soul was to be enwrapped in the impenetrable shades of eternal night.

In John 6 when many of His unreal, merely professing, disciples "went back and walked no more with Him," Jesus put the question to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" This searching interrogation brought from Peter his significant question, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" as well as his Christ-honoring declaration, "We believe, and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." The real, the born-again, disciple would not "*go away*"—a voluntary act—nor could he be *drawn away* by all the power of the enemy from without. The discipleship of the real was tested by death. They stood the devil's acid test, and went Home adorned with martyrs' crowns, as was the case with the eleven. All but John suffered death for Christ, and they flung him into a caldron of boiling oil, but God miraculously preserved him, and allowed his would-be-murderers to banish him to the little rocky isle of Patmos, where the Holy Spirit through him gave the only prophetic book in the New Testament. What panoramas of woe and vistas of glory flamed before his entranced vision as he sat alone looking through God's long-ranged telescope at things to come—things which must *now* shortly come to pass.

But to resume. Judas valued a few coins more than God's priceless Gift. Thirty pieces of silver induced him to sell the Maker of heaven and earth, and the world's Redeemer, while God's heaven-born sons calmly withstood the devil's shot and shell, and patiently endured for Christ's sake death in its fiercest forms. Thus Judas and the eleven stand in sharpest contrast. What made the difference?—his unreality, and their reality?

It can be said without fear of contradiction that the evil one is the producer of every false profession. He is the great "tare sower" of the ages, and he it is who dresses up "wolves in sheeps' clothing." He sets millions to work to merit heaven by doing. Strong indeed is his cable of religious delusion. He influences men to accept his lie, and to reject God's truth which leads to the *sure* and *only* foundation—Christ.

The only hope of heaven
That God Himself has given,
Is in the *Lamb* of God,
And His *most precious blood*
Poured out on Calvary.

Reader, be SURE that you have nothing and no one between your soul and God, but CHRIST.

A devil, or demon, is a spirit, invisible and intangible, therefore must have a body as an instrument through which it operates to accomplish the purpose of its master. Such a tool was Judas in the employ of Satan for the accomplishment of his desires with reference to Christ. So fully was he swayed and actuated by Beelzebub, the

prince of demons, that he was divinely called a devil—demon. But he was not a disinterested entity, without will, purpose, or responsibility; his will was Satan's will. He was so fully one with his master that he was willing to do anything that he suggested. He took the same attitude toward the devil as the faithful and godly child Samuel did toward Jehovah—"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Satan was lord, and Judas was servant. He was not only willing to hear, but to act—he acted for the gratification of his master, and earned for himself the pay of the damned.

Christ said of Judas, "Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born!" (Mark 14: 21) — awful pronouncement of Him who measured out His words according to the terror of Judas' fate. Hope for the traitor forever takes its flight under this unalterable utterance from the Judge of quick and dead. The Almighty's death-blow to Universalism falls also in the words, "Good were it for that man if he had *never been born.*" Were Judas to lay under the judgment of God for a million years, and then be released to enjoy eternal blessedness it could not be truthfully said, "Good were it for him if he had never been born." A million years is but a drop in the bucket in comparison with the ocean of everlasting years. Let any number of ages be thought of as bringing release, there would still be beyond them eternal ages.

The Saviour's last appeal to his Satan-ensnared

heart was, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" A kiss, that which is naturally a token of affection, was used to single out the Holy One for whom human demons bartered. To what measureless depths of wickedness and plots of infamy will one go who has pawned himself to the devil. But the joy of his bargain was soon to become Judas' wail of remorse, for the silver he put into his bag with the satisfaction of a bargain-driver, was shortly to be flung at the feet of the priests in burning compunction.

Even here sin has its pangs, and righteousness a measure of reward. Reader, beware of the devil's lure. The thing offered may look tempting and sweet, but there is in it the gall of bitterness, and if not forgiven the sting of eternal woe.

A few hours before, Judas *went out* from the last supper, from the hallowed presence of the Son of God, to sell Him to His foes for what he could get. After the condemnation of Jesus he returned to the heartless priests with the "filthy lucre" in his hand to undo the bargain, but unable to do this he *went out* from their scowling presence to hang himself under a storm-lashed and woe-laden conscience. And a few moments later his soul went out from his breathless body into "outer darkness."

The above are indeed terrible exits. Infinitely different are the following trio of grace-charming "into's": "Come, thou and all thy house, *into* the ark" (Gen. 7: 1); "And they that were ready *went in* with Him to the marriage" (Matt. 25: 10); "I will come *in to him*, and sup with him,

and he with Me" (Rev. 3:20). Notice in the above scriptures the advancing stages of joy and blessedness—salvation, nuptial festivities, and eternal fellowship with the Son of God.

In the case of Judas and every other lost soul there are stages of deepening gloom and woe—selling Christ, hanging himself (spiritual suicide), and going out into the night of eternal banishment.

Who would not miss the sinner's woe?
 And the saved one's glory gain?
 Who would not heaven's pleasure know?
 And miss hell's woe and pain?

After Judas finished his course in the service of his merciless master he went to "his own place" (Acts 1:25). Christ said that hell, "everlasting fire, was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25). But Judas was so fully one with the devil that the devil's place became his place. Judas was no intruder there—he had rights there—the devil's title to be there was his, *i.e.*, open rebellion against God. And such too is the place of all who disregard God and His Christ.

God has claims as *Creator* of all things, as *Sovereign* of the universe; as *Redeemer* of an alien world; as *Judge* of all the earth. And He will see to it that His claims are honored and acknowledged, though His stroke of eternal judgment must fall on all who impugn His rights and reject His claims. Being *almighty* He is able to conquer, and being *righteous*, He has the right to judge.

Nor is the saved one an intruder in heaven. He has rights there—the blood-purchased rights of the Son of God. Heaven is his homeland—his Father's house. "I go to prepare a place for you," said Christ to His own, and when the sinner receives Him as Saviour he is prepared for that prepared place—"My title to glory I read in His blood."

It may be beyond our province to say, in fact we are not called upon to affirm, that non-professors who have gone from the scenes of earth are lost—gone to hell—for we know not what took place in the soul ere the spirit took its flight. But no such uncertainty shrouds the passing of Judas. His doom was a settled matter, even when the flush of health glowed upon his cheek, and when he walked in the noonday glory of Christ's own presence.

Judas, to thee we bid adieu—an eternal, sad farewell,
And leave thee to thy chosen fate, in darkest gloom to
dwell.

Great was indeed thy privilege—companion of God's Son!
Yet thou didst choose the devil's way, and died by grace
unwon.

Reader, if Judas' master is your master, remember, his place will be your place. You may look with deep pity and with a measure of scorn upon one who is a suicide. Judas committed double suicide, but if you are rejecting Christ you are guilty of *soul*-suicide. Arouse! Wake up! Flee to mercy's open gate while God in grace still calls.

Barabbas

Barabbas is another whose memory will not die while God's historic records last. His liberation in connection with Christ's condemnation has immortalized his name. Never did the black and the white, the unholy and the righteous, the sinful and the sinless, come in closer proximity than when God's boundless love and Satan's matchless hatred met at Calvary.

Barabbas was justly lodged behind locks and bars, and under the sentence of death. He had graduated with satanic honors in the school of criminology, and he was soon to pay for it all upon an uplifted cross. On account of various crimes committed he was styled "a notable prisoner," and was about to meet a notable doom. By his disregard for God and man he stood pitted against himself. He had forfeited his right to live and earned his title to die.

As he sat in the gloom of his cell he had about as little hope of being freed from death's penalty as he had for the return of youth's innocent years. The judge had pronounced his sentence, the day was appointed, and as the laws of Rome were as inflexible as the fixed stars he had nothing to do but to grimly await the final hour.

On the morning of the fatal day Barabbas must have heard the gruff mutterings of officers and the

surging of feet at his prison-door. His heart was shot through with pangs of horror as the grinding of the key in the lock eloquently reminded him that soon merciless hammers would be spiking him to the cross. After unbarring the door the surly executors of the law, instead of dragging him to "the hill of the skull" for execution, said, "Barabbas, you are free!" The hardened criminal whose heart was callous at the fate of others almost swooned away at the unexpected assurance of pardon for himself. As the fact of his freedom found its way to his balanced reason—while his face was still blanched with the dark forebodings of doom—he tremblingly enquired as to the ground of his release, and doubtless he was legally informed that in open court by a unanimous vote he was chosen to be set free from prison and from a well-earned death, on the ground that Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, was to be put to death in his stead. This opens the darkest chapter in the annals of our world. Pilate presented two men to the vast court-throng that assembled on that awful occasion—not comparative men, but contrasted men—the Sinless, and the sinful, the Peace-Giver, and the peace-destroyer, the Life-Giver, and the life-taker, God's world-blessing and world-saving Son, and the devil's hardened son of wickedness. Yet without a moment's hesitation God's "Fellow" and the world's Benefactor was elected to die in preference to Barabbas, by a vote of the multitude. The high priest, the priests, the scribes and elders, the nation, and the heads of the nation,

clamored for His life, and bent every energy toward His destruction, and would not rest till they had accomplished their desire.

The Holy Spirit's flaying impeachment through Peter was, "Ye have denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer (Barabbas) to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised up" (Acts 3: 14, 15).

Jew-haters brand the Jews as "Christ-killers," as though they themselves are guiltless. But in the next chapter we find the whole world is indicted in this case of all cases of murder: "The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ, for a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together" (Acts 4: 26, 27). Thus God charges the entire world with the murder of His blessed Son. To kill another is homicide, to take one's own life is suicide, but at Calvary man committed Deicide—murder of God the Son. We are divinely informed that hell was made for the devil and his angels, but it has "enlarged itself" to engulf the unrepentant murderers of God's Son, and all others who reject and spurn His grace.

At the cross the devil's wrath was heated to its highest pitch; it was there through man (his willing tool) that he did his wildest work of the ages. But if at Golgotha Satan's rage reached its flood-tide, it was there also that God's love reached its high-water-mark. The sin that shed that "pre-

cious blood" can only be blotted out by the application of that blood. Upon the cross the bleeding Saviour prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Thus, there is forgiveness even for the murderers of "the Sovereign of the skies."

The human fiends that slew God's Son
May come to Him, and pardoned be.
Oh, wondrous is the grace of God,
That heaven to such He offers free.

But Satan and his hellish host,
That led the murderous onslaught there,
Have no evangel preached to them,
Which leaves them to their fell despair.

As Barabbas was imprisoned and sentenced to die because of his lawless acts, but deliverance came altogether apart from any thing that he could do, so man by believing the devil's lie got himself into the direst straits of woe, but nothing within the range of his possibilities can extricate him from the calamity he has brought upon himself—an everlasting calamity if not delivered.

Barabbas in his cell under the ban of death through outraged law, and then released from well-merited judgment by the death of God's Son in his stead, is a most solemn and illuminating illustration of how a sinner is saved by Christ's substitutionary work.

The word "Substitution" is not to be found in the Bible, but its glorious and awful truth runs as a broad majestic river from end to end of Inspiration's valley.

For four thousand years countless sacrificial victims upon Patriarchal and Jewish altars with their blood, fire, and smoke, proclaimed in thunder tones to the passing generations the necessity in the Divine estimation of vicarious atonement. Every bleeding sacrifice, as weary centuries rolled, announced that in the fulness of time Christ as God's atoning Lamb should come and complete all types and shadows. Thus from the hour of Eden's blight God was training sinful man to gaze with hopeful gaze down Time's blood-stained vista to Calvary.

'Twas there the work that saves was done
By God's eternal, sinless Son.

But God Himself looked forward to the Cross before the tide of years began. Christ was "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13: 8), in the thoughts and purposes of the Eternal.

Golgotha filled the future gaze of the timeless past, and will be the towering landmark in the backward look of eternal years. The hope of the lost, the joy of the saved, and the bliss of the glorified throng are founded on "the blood of the eternal covenant"—Christ on the cross in the sinner's stead.

Reader, what is the death of Christ to you? Is it to you what it was to Barabbas—deliverance from condemnation and death? He had forfeited his right to live; so have you, for you have sinned, and God says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die"

(Ezek. 18:20). As Barabbas was under the death-penalty, so are you, if unsaved. As he was judicially freed from physical death by Christ dying in his place, so you will be judicially freed from spiritual, eternal death—banishment from God's holy presence—by the substitutionary work of Him who died in your stead, when you place your soul's confidence in Christ as Saviour.

But there is this difference between Barabbas and you: He was not required to believe anything in order to be saved from a death of crucifixion; his deliverance came as a choice between him and Christ by a vote of the people. But God demands that you believe His Word about yourself as being lost and guilty, and that you believe—trust His Son, “who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). If you have not done this, and you refuse to do it ere life's short race is run, you will be compelled to endure the terrible ordeal of bearing your own sins forever in “outer darkness.” Then awake to your unspeakably serious situation, and flee to the Saviour of sinners without a moment's delay. Remember, your *faith* will be “counted to you for righteousness” as Abraham's was (Rom. 4:3), when in your deep need you *trust* that Holy Victim as your Saviour. There is *no way* to be saved but in the Barabbas-way—the death of God's Son in your stead.

Barabbas, you were guilty,
And death was your just due,
But Jesus was elected
To die instead of you.

The Guiltless saves the guilty—
O blessed, wondrous plan!—
God's Son came down to suffer
For lost and sinful man.

The work of substitution,
What can with it compare?
It caused angelic legions
To wonder and to stare.

They veiled their sparkling splendor
When they beheld God's Son
Vacate His heavenly glory
To die for worms undone.

Hear it, O death-doomed mortal!
And bow before His face
Who took your dreadful sentence
To save you by His grace.

Oh, tarry not, but hasten
Before God's judgment falls,
He will not plead forever,
But *now* to you He calls.

Believe God's gripping record
That you are really lost,
And He will freely save you
At Calvary's fearful cost.

If Barabbas (on being released) did not know who Jesus was by reputation, what must have been his thoughts of the Man who died in his place? He knew his own career of robbing, riot-leading, and murder, and he knew that Jerusalem knew it too, that it was about as black as the court-records of hell. How black then must be

that man's record whom the people unitedly elected to be crucified in his stead? But what must have been his surprise as he found by mingling with the throngs on the street, that the One by whose death he was free was love, goodness, and holiness personified, that in grace and compassion He fed the hungry, healed the sick, dried the mourner's tears, wept over the sinful, pardoned the guilty, and blessed and prayed for His enemies. According to the treatment accorded him and his substitute, crime and lawlessness were judged as virtues, while righteousness and holy deportment were frowned upon and blasted with the blight of death. Thus a premium was put upon sin, and a curse upon holiness. Barabbas then, on ascertaining the facts in the case, instead of seeing himself to be better than his substitute, would at once behold in himself a towering contrast to the One who was nailed to the gibbet. His thoughts would naturally shift to the throng whose vote freed him and condemned that innocent Man. Though he was unspeakably glad of liberation, he could tritely and sarcastically exclaim, "Behold, how they murder righteousness, and pardon wickedness!"

What shall be said of a city, a people, a nation, a world, that preferred Barabbas to Christ—loved sin, and hated righteousness, murdered innocence, and pardoned guilt? In that awful hour of stress "Pilate was determined to let Him go" (Acts 3: 13), but the demon-energized horde was determined to let Barabbas go, and subject Jesus to the criminal's death. They turned the tide in

their favor when they said to the weakling, Pilate: "If thou let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."

They might curry the favor of the reigning monarch by condemning the One who proclaimed Himself a King, but they incurred the burning displeasure of the Almighty, and brought a crushing avalanche of woe upon their unsheltered heads, for, thirty-seven years later, that guilty city was subjected to a siege so prolonged and terrible that hunger-driven parents ate their own offspring, and more than a million were put to the sword and sold like cattle into hopeless slavery. Thus came upon them (at least in part) their self-incurred and self-invited judgment: "His blood be on us and on our children." If Pilate was afraid of the consequences of the death of that "Just Person," they were void of fear in the matter. But what a sequel!

The trite old saying is true: "The mills of God turn slowly, but they grind exceeding small." The chariot-wheels of the Eternal seem sometimes slow, but certainty marks their onward move. Though men may scoff and laugh it off, this world's judgment for the slaughter and rejection of Christ is slated in heaven's criminal court, and from it there can be no appeal, or repeal. The wise of earth know not the avenging hour, but He who marks its guilt has set the day, and it shall meet its doom when the clock of His purpose strikes.

Judgment is God's "strange work." For nearly

two millenniums judgment has been waiting on mercy, for mercy to carry out its mission, but at the close of mercy's day a world-conquering blow shall fall. God might be represented as having a sworded hand uplifted to avenge the murder of His Son, while the other is outstretched in mercy beseeching His enemies to be reconciled to Him through the death they inflicted upon that blessed Son. O wondrous grace! But we must remember His judgment will equal His grace. There is no unequal balance with God.

Though no man knows that "inevitable hour," yet the ear that is trained to hear His voice can almost hear the thunder of His justly-kindled wrath rolling over the hills of earth, and the eye that is looking for the "Morning Star" can almost see the lightning-flashes of His displeasure already lighting up the murky clouds that are gathering over a doomed world. Proofs in multitudes abound declaring that "the day of the Lord is at hand." If not ready, I beseech you to accept at once earth's soon-coming, conquering King as your Saviour.

When God was about to consume the licentious cities of the plain He commanded Lot to flee to the mountains lest he be destroyed in the overthrow. And *you can only be safe from coming wrath by fleeing to Christ.*

Trust Him, and Him alone—
In Him is safety found.
Trust to no human prop,
Stand on no other ground.

Dear child of "the blessed hope," we know that we have been saved by His death to whom Barabbas owed his life and liberty. Then what meaning, what significance, what solemn attraction, that Cross must ever have for our souls! It is well for us "oft to resort thither" that we might be sobered, subdued, and made to feel its shame and woe for Him, and its salvation and blessing for us.

Looking at yon awful tree,
There the Son of God we see
Dying, that we might be free
From sin's appalling curse.

Then let us be found making frequent journeys there, that worship may flow from hearts melted by the solemn, sanctifying contemplation of His dying love for us.

Barabbas being released before Christ's crucifixion (see Luke 23:25), it is not at all unlikely that he stole his way in the crowd to Calvary where the suffering trio hung. The scenes of Golgotha must have had a peculiarly powerful attraction for him—his fellows in crime were there, and he himself was there in the person of his Substitute. Hearing the groans of the Man on the central cross, beholding His writhing anguish, and gazing upon His thorn-pierced brow would send a thrill of horror through his inmost being as he thought, *There I would be, were He not there*. In his bleeding, anguished, dying Substitute he saw himself.

O fellow-saved-one, let us steal away (in medi-

tation) to yon blood-stained tree, and in gazing on that sinless Victim, dying for wretched rebels, let us praise, worship, and adore the peerless One who suffered there for us.

O for such love let rocks cry out,
And sound the news to every zone;
Let saints their sweetest anthems shout,
That Christ should thus for man atone.

We know not whether the stony heart of Barabbas was ever melted and won by the fact that his deliverance from a malefactor's death was because the sinless Son of God suffered in his place. If Barabbas is among the ransomed through he has an experience peculiar to himself. What is true of him can be said of no one else in God's immortal host. Christ's death was for him twofold—saved from going to the cross, and from eternal judgment—saved from man's condemnation, and from God's.

But if he died without hope he went down to the darkness of the pit under the bright shining of Calvary's noonday glory of opportunity. If lost, he deliberately and determinedly walked by the door of heaven to reach the gate of hell.

Christian, since *He has died for us*, and we have *life by* and *in Him*, let us henceforth *live for Him*. May the glory-gilded promise of His coming, and our gathering together unto Him, wean our hearts more and more from a scene that is stained with the blood of our Saviour. Soon the Morning Star of our hope shall end the night of our waiting by ushering us into that day whose noon shall never

pass. Then with Him "who is our life" we shall enjoy to the full and forever the life we now have in Him.

Till then may our affections cry, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Roll on, roll on, ye weary years,
And haste that rapturous hour,
When Christ shall dry the mourner's tears,
And home His saints with power.

The Penitent Thief

In the iron days of Rome theft was punished by crucifixion. We know not whether this nameless wretch was steeped in years of crime, or just an amateur in pilfery—he was a thief, and as such he was nailed to the gibbet to die. It may or may not be true that there is a bright spot in every cloud. There was however a golden rift in this poor felon's inky darkness — he was not marked out for execution a day earlier, or a day later. Had it been so he would not have had the Saviour of mankind as a Sufferer at his side. "He who sitteth o'er the water-floods, and guides each drifting wave" timed the judge's sentence according to the dial of Calvary. Men might think of his crime as his final play on the checker-board of fate, but God made his day of doom his birthday of glory. God's grace fitted in well with this poor misfit of humanity.

To the untrained eye of beholders, or to indifferent passers-by, there was little or no difference in the occupants of the three crosses. They were viewed as one common herd suffering the penalty of outraged law, but the poles are close together in comparison with the moral distance that lay between the Man on the middle tree and His companions in suffering. They had lived for self, and He had lived for God—for God's glory and man's blessing. They had lived in sin, and He

in holiness. They were dying for their own sins, and He was dying for the sins of others. They were suffering at the hands of men for wickedness, and He was suffering at the hands of men and God for righteousness. Their death was closing up their life of sin, His death was opening up the gates of life to sinners, and bringing down oceans of blessing to death-doomed criminals. They were "children of wrath," and representatives of Satan, He was the Son of God, and the embodiment of His love and grace. They were "children of disobedience," and were suffering for that disobedience, He was obedient to His Father in all things, and died to make a way by which lost sons of men might become sons of God. Contrast, and not comparison, is the only measuring line that justice will allow between the thorn-crowned Man of Calvary and the men on either side.

Happily the crosses were close enough together so that the dying trio could hold converse one with another while this awful mode of punishment was mercilessly devouring their lives.

While the soldiers and rabble mob were pouring vicious taunts upon the sinless One, and spitting and hissing in His face, His voice was heard in pleading prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His love and pardoning grace for His enemies and murderers expressed in this heaven-sent prayer, was to this thief proof positive that this gracious Intercessor could not be ranked with sinful men, though he and his godless fellow-thief had an hour or two

before joined with the Christless mass at the foot of the cross "in casting the same in His teeth." He now judges himself, and yields to the mighty conviction that seizes his soul, and on hearing the other malefactor cry out to Jesus in sarcastic unbelief, "If thou be Christ, save Thyself and us" (salvation from crucifixion), at once rebukes him, and condemns himself and his fellow in the following searching words, "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we justly, for *we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man hath done nothing amiss.*" In thus addressing his sin-hardened companion he justifies Christ, and condemns all who had part in His crucifixion. Then in the same breath he implores the One whose surpassing love and grace had won his rebel heart, in the Spirit-wrought words, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Towering faith, Christ-honoring, and soul-saving faith, is here seen shining forth in all its warmth and brilliancy from a new-born soul. He owns Him Lord, He is that to him now, and he sees in Him earth's future King. The other thief and the godless crowd might see in Him nothing more than a common criminal, but to him He is a present Saviour, and his eagle eye of faith beholds Him on His future throne with the whole earth bowing at His feet. Immediately his agonizing Lord gave him sweeter comfort and a brighter hope than he requested in his prayer, "Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in paradise." "Today"—what promptitude! "With Me"—what

company! "In paradise"—what repose! He had only asked for a place in the coming kingdom—the kingdom has not yet come in outward power, and cannot until the King of glory comes back to judge the guilty world that put Him on the cross. The faith of this ransomed soul shall not be disappointed, for when earth's rejected Lord returns to the scene of His murder He shall come in the glory of the Father, accompanied by all the holy angels, and attended by the countless throng of shining saints in robes resplendent with eternal whiteness. In this throng the penitent thief shall be a glorified immortal, sharing the glory of that kingdom which he as a dying thief asked of the dying King long ages before, and while the weary years of this long dispensation have been rolling on he has been enjoying the blissful presence of his Saviour, the coming King, in the glory of God's untainted Paradise. Men thrust him into eternity as one unfit to live on earth, but through his repentance, and confession of sin, and faith in the One who hung by his side, the Saviour's work had made him "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Ere the mob went home from the scenes of the cross to rest from their murderous toil, he and his redeeming Lord were basking in the blessedness of that supernal Eden whose gates swing open to all who have the forgiveness of God through the atoning death of His Son.

The pardon of the thief's sins, his death, and entrance into paradise were all pressed into a brief span of time, unlike the happy and consecrated

Enoch, who walked the defiling scenes of earth with God 300 years ere his pilgrimage ended in "the land of unclouded day." One moment he was an unforgiven sinner; the next, a ransomed soul. One moment he was clothed in sin as a garment; the next, mantled in the robe of righteousness. One moment "a child of wrath;" the next, "a child of God." One moment he was groaning in the agonies of death, the next singing redemption's song in the courts of light.

I beseech you, unsaved reader, do as this thief did in confessing his sins and receiving Christ, but not as he did in putting off the supremely important question of salvation until his dying hour. YOUR dying hour may be the next. Yes, *this very hour*. "The King of Terrors" may this moment be at your door. Your rosy hope of long life may suddenly become the withered leaves of despair in the chilling hand of death. You have seen it proven more than once that it is but a moment from the fulness of health to the paleness of death. Thousands are victims of procrastination. I implore you do not be ensnared in this treacherous trap of the devil. If you trade in the daring business of "putting off" you are already in the swirl of the enemy's vortex, and without a moment's warning may be swallowed up in the ocean of destruction. *Don't*, DON'T expose your soul to the woes of eternal remorse for the bursting bubbles of Time.

"Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27: 1). This is God's solemn warning to you.

“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6: 2). This is God’s double exclamation of persuasion to you. Yield at once to His warning and beseeching.

Trust Christ, and happy be, and saved forever more;
Then serve and follow Him whom angel hosts adore.

The Impenitent Thief

It is an eternal truism, "All is well that ends well." A child may be born amid ill-omened circumstances, and in life be battered with storms of the fiercest nature, go through seas of fire and blood, but if he lands on heaven's peaceful shore it is "*well*" with him for all eternity. It can be reverently said, the penitent thief had as good an end as God Himself could give him—a place in His own eternal home of glory. But alas! how different with the thief of our present considerations. He was blessed with the same privilege and opportunity as the other, was as near to the Saviour who was mighty and willing to save, heard Christ's prayer for forgiveness for His murderers, heard his fellow confess his sins, and own Christ as Lord and future King, and heard Him give the penitent thief the blessed assurance that he would that day be with Him in Paradise, but he seemed to steel himself against love, power, and all the activities of grace that were there present to win his heart and save his soul.

We see exemplified in these two men this oft-repeated truth, "The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay." Some are melted by God's goodness and grace to repentance, which results in confession and forgiveness, while others are

like Pharaoh, whose heart was hardened by the goodness of God in removing the plagues from his land at his (Pharaoh's) oft-repeated requests. The gospel is to those who reject it "the savor of death unto death," but to those who believe it, "it is the savor of life unto life" (2 Cor. 2:16).

The two thieves may have been companions in crime, or may not have met until suspended on the cross, and it is possible that they never met Jesus in His gracious pathway among men. However, He met them under the awful circumstances of Calvary, and had common fellowship in the agonies of crucifixion, but in their dying breath He and they had come to the eternal parting of the ways—like the drop of rain that falls on a sharp rock on "The Great Divide;" half the drop goes down the western slope to the Pacific and the other half down the eastern slope to the Atlantic. O my soul, terrible is the contemplation! So near the Saviour and the gate of heaven, and yet outside forever! But such are the paths of severance between the Saviour and the unsaved, and between the unsaved and the saved. How great the difference indicated by the prefix "im"—impenitent, penitent. The difference is the difference between light and darkness, salvation and damnation, Satan's service and God's reward, a world of bliss and a world of woe.

Reader, allow me ask, would the two letters "i-m" before the word "penitent" describe the attitude of your soul toward God? If so, and you die in this condition, then read your doom

in your attitude. O how canst thou be indifferent in the presence of such tremendously solemn realities? Remember, thy indifference is Satan-produced, and must inevitably be God-judged.

The three crosses of Golgotha represent the whole world and the Saviour combined—the lost, the saved, and the Saviour. The saved thief represents the ransomed throng, and the other the lost host. Christ hanging between them separates them. He is between the dead and the living, *i.e.*, the dead in sins and those alive unto God. The cross of Christ divides the world today. Those on one side are separated by the cross from death and judgment, and are ready for the abode of the blest, but the class on the other side by their choice of sin and rejection of Christ are headed for the abode of the lost.

The cross, the cross, divides mankind!
The cross of Christ, the only way
By which a guilty soul can find
The path that leads to endless day.

The saved thief before he trusted Christ had sin both *IN* him and *ON* him, but only had sin in him (in his nature) after he placed his soul's confidence in the Saviour, for those sins upon him (those he committed) were borne by Christ, and were forgiven when confessed. The other (unless saved ere he expired) died with sin both *in him* and *on him*. But Christ was inherently and intrinsically holy—had no sin either *in Him*, or *on Him* during His life. The Spirit declares He was "without sin," "He did no sin," "He knew

no sin," for "in Him is no sin." Thus His Holy Person is guarded from every quarter from the impeachment of sin. But the solemn fact is emphasized also that "God made Him to be sin for us (a Sin-Bearer on the cross) who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5: 21). It was the ponderous weight of human guilt imputed to Him on the cross that made Him cry out in overwhelming grief: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Drink in, believing soul, the sweetness and solemnity of this searching, heart-assuring, and praise-producing truth, "that He was treated on the cross as though He had committed all our sins, and now God reckons to us as though we had performed all His righteousness." It is thus God has "made us accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1: 6). God put our sins to Christ's account, and now He puts His righteousness to our account—sins imputed to Christ, and righteousness imputed to the believing sinner. Oh, who would not worship Him for love like this!

We shall now look at Christ as the storm-center of worlds, and as God's Lamb among the devil's wolves. In infancy His life was sought for by Herod. In the wilderness the devil seemed to forget all other realms and interests that he might train all his powers of seduction and allurements upon Him. Throughout His public ministry He was hunted and hounded by the religious leaders of the land. More than once did the Jews take up stones to slay Him. At Nazareth the multitudes rose up against Him to thrust Him over

the brow of the hill to destruction. The waves of Galilee threatened to engulf Him when asleep upon a pillow. And at last it seemed as though all the tempests of the universe used Calvary as the venting point of their wrath—the storm of Satan's hatred, the maelstrom of human enmity, and the waterspouts of God's wrath against sin, all broke in wildest fury on His unsheltered head. God, man, and Satan all had a part in filling His cup with overflowing bitterness—

*"Our sins in all their terror there,
God's wrath, and Satan's power."*

And then the arch-rebel and schemer of the ages lined up a squad of foul vultures in human form to disgrace the Holy One in a special way. He had Judas, the devil's own child, to sell and betray Him. He had the court-throng so cultivated in wickedness that they chose Barabbas the murderer for release, and the sinless Son of God for condemnation, and for final ignominy had a thief crucified on each side of Him. Thus, the blessed life-giving Son of the Father suffered and died in the midst of "hell's half-acre." No wonder the earth shook under His cross, and the sun above His head shrunk away into night-shades while such unwonted indignities were being heaped upon God's incarnate Son.

O pardoned soul, consider well
The bitterness of that dark hell—
The woes of which no tongue can tell,
That He for thee endured.

O may thy heart go out in praise
To Him who suffered there,
And gladly spend thy earthly days
In service, praise and prayer.

Did I say, "final ignominy?" Yes, as far as time was concerned, but these tenacious propagators of unrelenting hatred would pursue Him beyond His latest breath and subject Him to further humiliation by burying His body in the potter's field among paupers and criminals, but God would tolerate no such disgrace. He intervened and balked their degrading purpose by moving Joseph, a rich man of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus, to beg His body that he might bury it in his own new tomb. If He had an ignominious death He had an honorable burial, and within three days He had a glorious resurrection—"rose in the power of an endless life"—and forty days later had a glory-crowned ascension. And now faith's tearless eye beholds a vacant cross, an empty tomb, and a glorified Saviour on heaven's radiant throne. Blessed be His name, soon the mighty Victor shall see to the full "the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." When He gazes upon the countless millions of redeemed from time's dark fields of sin, and sees His image reflected in each glorified form, He will say, "These are the trophies of Calvary, the harvest of My atoning toil," then He shall be SATISFIED (Isa. 53: 11). And each redeemed one, looking onward to the rapturous moment of His coming, can exclaim with exulting anticipation, "I shall

be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). The dead in Christ shall be raised in His likeness, and the living shall be changed into His likeness. The Saviour, then, and the saved—dead and living—shall not be fully satisfied until all the saints are glorified; and their glorification cannot be consummated until Christ returns for all His own. Blessed hope! Glorious prospect, now so near!

Reader, will you be among that satisfied and glorified throng, or among the lost and wailing host?

Will you like the penitent thief share the bliss of His presence, and the splendor of His kingdom, or like the impenitent thief die in your sins and share the eternal woes of the doom of the lost?

Four Centurions

Foreword

FAITH.—Unwavering faith in Christ to heal his servant is what distinguishes Centurion No. 1.

TESTIMONY.—A strong outcrying testimony as to the dying One being “A Righteous Man,” and “The Son of God,” is what marks Centurion No. 2.

PIETY AND RELIGIOUSNESS, yet the need of salvation, is prominent in Centurion No. 3.

COURTESY AND KINDNESS to Paul, the servant of Christ, are conspicuous in Centurion No. 4.

CENTURION No. 1.

In gathering a few lessons from the four centurions under consideration, we will begin with the unnamed one in Luke 7. In contemplating him we almost venture to think that had he lived in one of the vanished dispensations, his name might have helped to swell the vast list of God’s immortal honor roll in Hebrews 11. Though the herculean task of building an ark was not assigned to him, nor was he called upon like Abraham to leave home, kindred and country, nor like Moses, meet the frowns of Egypt’s haughty king, and deliver a groaning nation from thraldom’s heavy chain, yet, like Abraham, the father of the faithful, “he was strong in faith giving glory to God.” Of him Jesus said, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

From Matt. 11 we learn that Capernaum was one of the cities where Jesus did most of His

mighty works. He upbraided it because in its exaltation and pride it repented not, declaring that if the mighty works which were done in it had been done in Sodom it would have remained till then, and that it would be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for Capernaum. Thus it was proverbial in impenitence and unbelief. But what a cheering contrast did the Saviour find in this resident of the city. He was not a Jew, nor a Samaritan, but a Gentile, a Roman.

An honored servant of the centurion's household was sick and ready to die, but when he heard of Jesus coming to the city, hope like a bright star sprang up in the valley of despair. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," was a truism in his case. He called the elders of the Jews, and sent them to beseech Jesus to come and heal his dying servant. When they came to Him they said, "Lord, he is worthy for whom Thou shouldst do this, for he loveth our nation, and hath built us a synagogue." How little these elders comprehended the Saviour's mission to man. Had they realized the meaning of grace they would not have heralded the centurion's worthiness as the ground of *pure grace—unmerited favor*. Be it remembered that if God is to pronounce upon man apart from grace it must be *malediction* instead of benediction. Man is a fit subject for hell or grace.

Reader, please suffer a plain personal interrogation. Upon what are *your* hopes of heaven founded, if indeed you have any hopes? Is it self-righteousness, church-membership, sacramental

rights, good resolutions, and such like? If you are trusting to what you are, what you have done, what you are doing, or what you hope to do, your hopes will suffer the same fate as that of the hypocrite. God has declared that shall perish (Job 8:13)—and yours must share the same fate, though, far from playing the hypocrite, you may be honest in your convictions, exact in your morality, and devout in your religious devotions.

As to myself I take altogether a different stand. His grace has taught me to say,

“I stand upon His (Christ’s) merits,
I know no safer stand.”

For thirty years I have been singing,

“For nothing good have I
Whereby Thy grace to claim;
I’ve washed my garments white
In the blood of Calvary’s Lamb.”

“My hope on nothing less is built,
Than Jesus and the blood He spilt.”

“Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee.”

My brother, while travelling by rail recently, asked a pensive-looking fellow-passenger, “Are you saved?” He answered with a firm joyful “Yes.” “What is your hope?” he was asked. “The best that heaven can give,” was the reply. “What is that?” “CHRIST,” he answered with deepened emphasis. Blessed answer! An apostle could

say no more, and I am sure he would say no less. I repeat there is not in a single soul of Adam's race an atom of righteousness, worthiness, or merit to recommend him to God, or to fit him for His holy presence. Those who are saved can triumph and boast *only in Christ*—they can join with the apostle in exclaiming, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

Suppose a wealthy kind-hearted gentleman walking down the street sees a dirty little homeless waif; he takes him by the hand and leads him home, bathes him, clothes him, and adopts him into his family, and makes him an heir of all that he possesses. Now on what ground does this waif enjoy all the privileges of that magnificent home, and become heir of all his wealth? Is it by *merit* or moral worth? Or is it by *pure grace*—favor without merit or worth? This is a very meager and imperfect illustration because it does not embrace the truth of substitution, *i.e.*, Christ coming down to die for (instead of) criminals under a death sentence, and without this salvation is impossible. The believer, beholding Calvary's cross, exclaims with welling tears and heaving bosom, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), and sings with joy and sorrow mingling,

"When blood from a victim must flow,
This Shepherd by pity was led
To stand between us and the foe,
And willingly died in our stead."

Ah, fellow-saved-one, thou knowest that the King of Glory, the Sovereign of the skies, came down and took our death warrant from the hand of justice, and said, "I'll bear the punishment instead," and on the cross He bore what we could never bear, "the Almighty's righteous ire."

But to resume. When Jesus was nearing the centurion's house he sent friends to Him, saying, "Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof, neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee, but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed."

What a contrast! The elders of the Jews were proclaiming his worthiness, and he was proclaiming his unworthiness! It has been truly said, "The way of exaltation is the dust." David confessed his sin and was forgiven (Ps. 32), and became the sweet singer of Israel. Isaiah cried, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips," and on his confession a seraph flew with a live coal from off the altar and touched his lips; his iniquity was purged, and his sin was taken away; then he was sent as a messenger of the God of Israel (Isa. 6). The thief on the cross acknowledged that he was receiving the due reward of his deeds. He died that day a ransomed soul, and he has had the companionship of Christ in Paradise ever since (Lk. 23: 43). The Publican cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and he went down to his house justified (Lk. 18: 13, 14). These men entered into the truth of Prov. 28: 13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth

and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Confession and forgiveness go together, *i.e.*, self-condemnation and judicial justification. It is evident that while Jesus was on the way to the house conviction was deepening in the soul of the centurion. The sense of the Saviour's greatness, dignity, and holiness was increasing, and the sense of his own nothingness, unworthiness and sinfulness was augmenting, for at first he sent the elders to beseech Him to come and heal his servant, but shortly after he sent friends to ask Him not to come, and he emphatically gives unworthiness as a reason for not coming personally to Christ, nor having Him come under his roof, "But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed."

Jesus on hearing this marvelled at him, and turned and said to those who followed, "I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." This was towering faith, faith superlative in Christ, coupled with a deep realization of his own nothingness before the glory of Him whose power he desired to have exercised upon his valued servant. He believed Christ's word spoken on the highway in reference to the dying one would have power to stay the "King of Terrors," and to restore him to perfect health. Naaman thought that in order to be healed of his leprosy the prophet would need to come and "strike his hand over the place" (2 Kings 5). And the woman that had the issue of blood said, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be whole" (Matt. 9:21). But this mighty son of faith needed no stroke of the hand, touch of

the finger, not even a glance of His kindly eye—a word was sufficient for him, even though the Speaker was not within the range of hearing or seeing. Blessed faith in One who did not, and could not disappoint him! “His servant was healed in the selfsame hour” (Matt. 8:13).

Faith might be termed the soul’s link with God. Reader, does such a link exist between your soul and God? Remember, “Without *faith* it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6). Without faith it is impossible to be saved, and, thank God, it is impossible for those who have faith in Christ to be lost. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

Matthew in his account of Christ and the centurion gives what Luke omits; after saying, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel,” He said, “I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom, but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” meaning that the heathen, some from the Gentiles, such as the centurion, would receive Christ and be saved, while many of the Jews—the highly favored people of God, to whom were committed the oracles of God—would reject the Saviour and be lost.

Reader, how is it with you? Shall poor benighted heathen be charmed by the sweet strains of the gospel, and come home to the Father’s house of love and light and song from the jungles

of Africa, from India's night-shades of sin, and from the ice-fields of the Arctic, to sing redemption's song with all the saints above, and *you* go down to the pit to wail with demons in their woe—*you*, who have been and are so wondrously privileged in this land of gospel truth and light, where the Bible can be purchased for almost a song, where the glad tidings of free grace are sounded forth from church, chapel, mission hall, and on the street. Shall YOU under the sound of all God's invitations and entreaties of grace, seal your doom by carelessness and indifference? Thus you will put upon your own lips the cry, *Hope gone for aye! despair forever mine!* Awake! Be aroused! It will be too late when the undertaker undertakes your case. Honor Christ by trusting Him as your Saviour, and you shall receive the greatest blessing that heaven can bestow—life in endless measure, and joy forevermore.

CENTURION No. 2.

TESTIMONY.—A strong out-crying testimony as to the dying One being "A Righteous Man" and "The Son of God," is what marks Centurion No. 2.

It was three o'clock in the afternoon. Three crosses stood on Calvary's brow, with three men stretched upon them, in dying anguish. Two of them were malefactors, criminals justly tried and condemned according to Roman law, but the other was *guiltless, harmless, undefiled, and pure*, therefore maliciously and unjustly condemned. For the past six hours the rabble mob held awful

revelry around the trio of sufferers, or rather upon the benignant Man upon the middle cross did they vent their hate and rage, while the strong armed body of Roman soldiers sullenly stood guard. During the last three hours, from twelve to three in the afternoon, deep darkness covered the land. Suddenly a cry of need arose from the central cross, "I thirst." It was answered with a mixture of gall and vinegar. From amid the Egyptian gloom of that appalling scene that voice again was heard, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Convulsed and sympathizing nature answered back with quaking earth and rending rocks. Hark again! His cries are waking echoes on dark Calvary's hill. "He cried with a loud voice, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

When the centurion who stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, "*Truly this Man was the Son of God!*" (Mark 15:39). The loud expiring cry, the three hours of darkness, and the earthquake's heavy throes were to the centurion indisputable evidence that the One who wore the crown of thorns was more than man.

Christ's emphatic declaration previously uttered in Solomon's porch, "*I am the Son of God*" (John 10:36), and what was later dictated by the Holy Spirit, "*God was manifest in the flesh*" (1 Tim. 3:16), was here echoed forth in the presence of that vicious murderous host by this convinced Roman captain. Oh, supreme and glorious declaration of foundation Christian Truth!

If the caviling, sign-seeking Jews did not believe that He was the *Son of God*, there was a *dying thief* by His side, and a Gentile *centurion* standing by His cross who did.

Would that all Unitarians, doubters and disputers of Christ's Deity could assemble at the base of yonder cross, and hear, and reverently believe his emphatic, inspiring and unique testimony, "*Truly this Man was the Son of God.*"

And now, reader, allow me to ask you in the language of Him "Who spoke as never man spake," "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" An eternity of bliss, or an eternity of woe, hangs on the answer of your soul to this question. To the scorning unbelieving Jews Christ said, "If ye believe not that I am He (Christ the Messiah) ye shall die in your sins, and where I am ye cannot come."

Of the hundreds of thousands of Israel who left Egypt, whose bones littered the wilderness, God said, "They could not enter in to Canaan because of unbelief" (Heb. 3: 19). And if my reader misses heaven it will be "because he has not believed the record that God gave of His Son" (1 John 5: 10).

At His baptism, and on the mount of transfiguration, God proclaimed through opened heavens, "*This is My Beloved Son*" (Matt. 3: 14). Peter on confessing Him as the Son of God was by Him pronounced "blessed" (Matt. 16: 17). Nathanael looked into His blessed face and said, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God" (John 1: 49). Thomas on being invited to behold His wounds

exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Paul, immediately after his conversion, preached in the synagogues that "He is the Son of God" (Acts 9:20).

Ere leaving this exalted theme of confessing Christ, I desire for the edification of young Christians to mention four confessions.

First, the confession of sins to God. "If we confess our sins, He (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Without this confession none are saved. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). Those who cover their sins, *i.e.*, refuse to confess them now, will have them all uncovered at the judgment-day to their eternal shame and loss, but those who uncover them now, confess them to God in this life, He will cover them — blot them out, and remember them no more forever. Dear young child of God, you have made this confession and are saved, but have you made the next, *i.e.*, confessed with *your mouth the Lord Jesus?* (Rom. 10:9). This should be the first step after conversion.

After one has confessed his sins to God, and knows that he is saved, then he should confess his Saviour before men. Joy comes with this confession as well as with the former. One cannot be happy, neither can he grow, unless he makes an open confession of Christ as his Saviour. If you have found Him precious to your soul, then let it be known to those with whom you come in con-

tact. God might bless your testimony to others, as doubtless He used some one to carry the tidings of life and peace to you, either in reading, preaching, or private conversation, and though you confess Him and preach Him a thousand times and see no results, do not be discouraged, it will cheer your own soul. And remember that every time you present Him as the only Saviour of sinners, you honor and glorify your blessed Redeemer.

Every believer has the privilege of commending Christ to others in a twofold way—and shame on him if he does not—that is, confessing Him with the mouth, and living a life before friends and foes that will compel them to believe that he seeks to glorify the One whose name he bears.

And third, the child of God has the consoling guarantee from the lips of his Saviour that while he is confessing Him before men, his Saviour is confessing him before His Father in heaven (Matt. 10:32). *While the believer is confessing Christ here, Christ is confessing his name there.* O dear saved one, how this should inspire our hearts with increased gratitude to Him, that our worthless names are on His lips in yonder courts of light. Then let us willingly and joyfully confess His peerless name before men, declaring in no uncertain tone that there is no other name given among men whereby sinners can be saved (Acts 4:12).

And fourth, in Hebrews 11 it is stated that Abraham and other heavenly-minded Old Testament saints “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” This was

not so much a mouth-confession as a confession in deportment—actions. They “looked for a city that hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God!” They knew that no such city could be found on earth’s domain, but they looked for it in the ages to come—a city not cursed by sin, and through whose streets creeps no funeral with its burden to the tomb. They gave up the present for the future, knowing that there was nothing stable here, but they lived in anticipation of that which was substantial and abiding, so their minds were set on brighter things to come, and they acted accordingly.

In this dispensation the Saviour admonishes His own to lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6: 20). Everything here is crumbling, decaying, and dying. All that is of value to the believer lies beyond “the narrow sea that divides that heavenly land from ours.” And in Philippians the child of God is exhorted to, “Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.” One who is setting his affections or mind on things above will be heavenly-minded; he will not be entangled and engrossed with the affairs of this world, which he knows from his Father’s Book is doomed for judgment. He will act upon the principle that he is *in* the world, but not *of* it. If his *hands* are engaged *below* his *thoughts* will be fixed *above*.

Peter writing to those who are saved calls them “*pilgrims and strangers*” (1 Pet. 2: 11). A stranger is one who is not at home in the place

where he is; and a pilgrim is one who is travelling to a place he has in view. Then, dear unsaved one, let these scriptures search us, and let us see to it that in greater measure we *confess* with *words* and *actions* that we really are strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

In returning to consider the centurion, we find that when Christ expired he also said, "*Truly this was a righteous Man.*" He knew that the two thieves crucified with Him were not righteous, and by making this declaration he judged all who took part in crucifying Jesus, for if He was a righteous Man, then those who condemned and nailed Him to the cross were guilty of an awful crime — yea, the crime of all crimes, and more, a double crime—the murder of the Son of God, and the only truly righteous Man that ever graced the world.

The twofold confession that the centurion made, "Son of God and Son of Man," was really that made by the Saviour Himself to Nicodemus in John 3. In vers. 13, 14 He calls Himself the Son of Man, and in vers. 16, 17 He calls Himself the Son of God. This He always was, is, and always will be, and in Him *alone* was found *perfection* of *humanity*; thus we have Deity enshrined in humanity. Of Him it is declared, "*He knew no sin*" (2 Cor. 5: 21); was "*without sin*" (Heb. 4: 15); and He "*did no sin*" (1 John 3: 5).

Sinless perfection never was, and never will be, found in any man, save in the God-Man—His every *thought*, *word* and *deed* were without taint of evil. O child of God, well may we sing,

“O what a Saviour is Jesus the Lord!
Well might His Name by His saints be adored!”

As Son of Man, God has committed all judgment unto Him (John 5:27), and as Man He sits on God’s throne to-day. “There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 2:5). Written more than thirty years after His ascension this is *still* true of Him, and *ever* will be—“*The Man Christ Jesus.*”

“If asked what of Jesus I think,
Though still my best thoughts are but poor,
I say He’s my Meat and my Drink,
My Life, and my Strength, and my Store,
My Shepherd, my Trust and my Friend,
My Saviour from death and from thrall,
My Hope from beginning to end,
My Portion, my Life, and my ALL.”

CENTURION No. 3.

PIETY AND RELIGIOUSNESS, yet needing salvation, is prominent in Centurion No. 3.

We have no divine testimony as to the character and manner of life of Centurion No. 2. What makes him shine out so brilliantly on Inspiration’s page is his bold proclamation of the dying Saviour as “a Righteous Man,” and as “the Son of God.” Like Centurion No. 1 his name is not even given. But here we have the name, and a very full, though brief, account of the man we are about to consider.

Cornelius was stationed at Cæsarea as a centurion or captain over the Italian cohort, or band.

This was his position officially, as given in Acts 10:1. In ver. 2 he is brought prominently before us morally and religiously. Notice the four things that the Holy Spirit has recorded of him. “A *devout* man, and one that *feared God* with all his house, which *gave much alms* to the people, and *prayed to God alway*.” In this concise verse his devotion is presented in a twofold way, *i.e.*, toward man and toward God. He was *devout—pious*, an exemplary character—a man of blameless life; that is what he was. “*Giving much alms to the people;*” this is what he did. He considered the poor and needy, the orphan’s cry and the widow’s need appealed to him, and made him a liberal giver. Thus what he *was* and what he *did* beautifully correspond. In ver. 22 the testimony of the three messengers is given. They tell Peter that Cornelius is “a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews.” Their testimony in regard to him harmonizes with the declaration of the Holy Spirit in ver. 2. Then as to the other side, the divine side, “he feared God with all his house, and prayed to God alway.” He had a God-fearing household; all that were under him were in subjection, piety ruled in that house, and exerted a mighty influence for good. “Fearing God with all his house,” precludes the thought of any slighting or sarcastic remarks being made of sacred or divine things under his roof. “And prayed to God alway.” What a mighty epitome of devotion expressed in five words! This affirmation is co-equal with the admonition to the Thes-

salonians to "Pray without ceasing." From ver. 30 we learn not only did he pray, but he fasted.

Thus we have taken a brief survey of this wonderful character—we have viewed him in his piety and benevolence among men, and have looked into the inner shrine of his soul, and seen him in his praying, fasting, and God-fearing attitude. And where among men, it might be asked, could be found a more upright, righteous, religious man? Yet with the 11th chapter of Acts open before us, we are authorized, yea, compelled to say, "*He was not saved.*" Does my reader at this throw up his hands and despairingly exclaim, "Then there is no hope for any of us." Hold! Be not too hasty. Wait for the sequel.

But before quoting authority let me strike a heavy blow at devotedness, almsgiving, religiousness, praying, etc. Nay! Not at these let me strike, for they are good, desirable—yea, they are blessed graces and devotions—but let the stroke fall with burning and telling weight on *you*, my reader, if you are counting on these things for salvation. You may well despair of heaven if you have no better foundation for your hope of entrance there. On the authority of Christ let me affirm that you will never be there at all—you are SURE of missing it, if in these or all such things you trust, for HE hath said, "*Except a man be born again he cannot enter or even see the kingdom of God*" (John 3: 5). You might as well try to cross the raging torrent of Niagara on a straw as to hope to gain heaven by doing all that is embraced in the catalogue of right-

eousness and piety. The righteousness of God, the grace of God, the cross of Christ, together with all that you are in yourself, and what you are by nature, rise up against you to bar your entrance on the ground of good resolutions, holy desires, almsgiving, praying, works of righteousness, yea, anything and everything that comes within the scope of a mortal's ability.

But, on the other hand, even if you rank as the blackest character among earth's vilest criminals, and but take your true place in confession before God as a guilty, needy, helpless sinner, and receive Christ as your Saviour, the righteousness of God, the grace of God, and the cross of Christ, are all at once on your side for blessing. Yea, the inestimable blessing of eternal salvation then shall be yours, though earth and hell, though all carnate and incarnate hordes your way oppose.

But to resume. Peter, in relating the conversion of Cornelius and his household to the saints at Jerusalem, told them how the centurion had seen an angel in his house who told him to send men to Joppa to call the apostle that he might *tell him "words whereby he and all his house should be SAVED"* (Acts 11:13). This is irrefragable proof that he was not saved, was a most anxious soul—one in whom the Spirit of God was mightily working. In Acts 10:4 the angel called him by name, and told him that his prayers and alms had come up for a memorial before God, but prayers and alms could not save him, nor could these in any wise be a foundation for his faith.

He must have a Person put before him, and that One must be the Person of God's Son in whom faith could rest.

While the Spirit of God at Cæsarea was preparing Cornelius for the reception of the gospel, He was fitting Peter at Joppa to carry the message of life and peace to this Gentile and his household. Before this, Peter, who was the apostle to the Jews, thought salvation was only for the Jews. But he saw in a trance a great sheet let down from heaven in which were beasts, creeping things, fowls of the air, which were not lawful for a Jew to eat, and heard the command, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." This, repeated three times, proved to him "God was no Respector of persons," that unto the Gentiles He was also "granting repentance unto life."

But sad indeed was the sacrilegious act of this devout man in falling down to worship the apostle when he was coming into his house (ver. 25). It is blessed to see him afterwards look beyond the messenger, and hear him say to Peter in the house, "Now therefore are we all here present before God to hear all that is commanded thee of God" (ver. 33). The apostle who was bowed to in worship a few moments before was now entirely lost sight of save as a mouthpiece. The faithful act of Peter in lifting him up, and the stern rebuke administered in the words, "Stand up! I myself am also a man," taught him a great lesson. God was the all-absorbing One before his soul then.

Then this divinely-sent and qualified servant

began to preach *peace by Jesus Christ*. Peace! This is what he did not possess, what his soul craved, and what he was about to receive. Peter brought a rich cluster of truths before his entranced listener concerning Christ, *His life*. "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." He spoke of *His atoning death, His glorious resurrection*, and that *He was ordained of God to be the Judge of living and dead*, and then as a convincing and overwhelming testimony quoted the Old Testament scriptures concerning Christ, and compressed volumes of truth into the never-to-be-forgotten words, "To Him give all the Prophets witness that whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." This comprehensive and manifold declaration swept all former ages, and fell with accentuated force upon the Spirit-impressed hearers assembled to hear of Him "of whom Moses in the Law and in the Prophets did write," whom God had sent to save all who put their trust in Him, and whom Peter preached to the salvation of all who heard the joyful tidings that day, for "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word."

Then Cornelius and all the rest of that happy company had *peace, assurance, salvation, eternal life*. They heard "words whereby he (Cornelius) and all his house should be saved," and that was the word which "God sent unto the children of Israel *preaching peace by Jesus Christ, He is*

Lord of all”—Gentiles as well. And, reader, *you* can have *peace* in no other way, but *by Jesus Christ*. “He has made *peace* by the *blood* of *His cross*” (Col. 1:20), and when you as a guilty sinner receive Him as your Saviour you will join with all the saved in declaring: “Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through (or, by) our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5: 1).

Did I say you could get peace in no other way but through Christ? Yes; there is a peace that the devil gives to those who trust in themselves, *i.e.*, what they are, and what they do—morality, religious performances, rites and ceremonies, etc.; but it will be broken in upon and forever destroyed when the breakers of death roll over the soul, and the deceived wake up on the other shore to find that the enemy of souls fed them while here on sugar-coated pills of false peace—those pills, though sweet to the taste here, will be found over there to be filled with the poison of eternal despair.

Beware!—a thousand times beware!!—of *trusting anything* or *anyone* but CHRIST. All who trust Him are saved, but all who reject Him are lost.

CENTURION No. 4.

COURTESY AND KINDNESS to Paul, the servant of Christ, are conspicuous in Centurion No. 4.

Paul's journey to Rome was like his journey from “the City of Destruction to the Celestial

City"—a tempestuous one. The former was about 1500 miles and took him only a few weeks (apart from his three months' stay on the island of Malta, where he was shipwrecked), but the latter was thirty-two years long and covered his entire Christian career. "Bonds and afflictions abide me," he could truly say of both passages. On the way to the imperial city to have his case tried by the far-famed Cæsar, he encountered one of the fiercest tempests that ever swept the Mediterranean. Neither sun nor stars for many days appeared; for fourteen days and nights he was driven up and down in Adria by the wrath of Euroclydon (a cyclonic sea-tempest of the fiercest violence), and then suffered shipwreck on an heathen island.

Dark and trying had been his experience at Cæsarea as he lay bound and in prison for more than two years. Now, humanly speaking, gloomy forebodings loomed before him as he thought of standing before the haughty Roman emperor, and on his way to be thus tried, to meet a wrathful sea and a death-threatening typhoon, it seemed as though the elements frowned upon him as well as men.

But on the divine side the sun of his hope was bright and unshrouded, for if earth did its worst and cast him out, heaven would open its pearly gates and take him in—the worst that tempests, men and devils could do against him was to send him Home, for there he was destined to be, and there he longed to be. "To be with Christ which is far better," was his own expressed desire

on another occasion. But on the human side was a star that lit up the gloom amid the trying circumstances on the way to Rome; this was Julius, the centurion of Augustus' Band, into whose custody Paul and the rest of the prisoners were committed. Whether he was naturally a gracious, kind-hearted man or not, is beyond our province to say. From Acts 28 and 29 we would rather infer that he was. However that may be, we know he was courteous to Paul. The Lord at least through him graciously "tempered the wind to the shorn lamb."

Julius either heard at Cæsarea that there was no just cause for Paul's imprisonment, or divine grace played upon his conscience disposing him to show the apostle favor, and to grant him liberties that were not accorded the other prisoners. The first landing on the voyage was at Sidon; there he allowed Paul to visit his friends to refresh himself. At Myra the centurion put them into another ship, and after sailing many days, encountering contrary winds, they came to the Fair Havens. There the apostle acted more like an officer of the ship than a prisoner, for knowing that the storm period was on, which made sailing dangerous, he admonished the sailors to winter there, saying, "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading of the ship, but also of our lives." But as the harbor was not commodious to winter in and the south wind blew softly, they launched forth. Of course it was natural that the centurion would pay more attention to the master and

owner of the ship than to Paul, especially when the soft south wind fanned his cheek, thus betokening a peaceful voyage. But they had not gone far when the tempest broke in all its sear-moving fury, and raged on with unabated force till all despaired of life. They lightened the vessel of its burden, and even cast the tackling into the sea. Then said Paul, "Sirs, you should have listened to me, and not have loosed from Crete, and have gained this harm and loss." Then he gave them more than his "perceive." "There stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve (Blessed truths, ownership and service!), saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar; and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee; wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

On the fourteenth night of the storm the shipmen hearing an unusual sound, deemed they drew near to some country. On sounding they found it twenty fathoms deep, on sounding again it was fifteen. Then fearing the ship should be driven upon rocks they cast anchors out of the stern. The sailors then lowered a boat pretending they were about to cast anchors out of the foreship. They did this that they might save themselves by escaping in the boat. Paul, detecting their deception, said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." If they did not believe Paul before, they believed him then, for the soldiers cut the ropes and let the boat fall off. Then they believed him further,

for at his advice they took food and were cheered.

What anxiety must have filled the souls of the passengers and crew as they waited for the break of the day. When the morning dawned they spied a creek into which they desired to thrust the ship. They lifted the anchors, unfurled the sails, and committed themselves to the landward hurricane that swept them forward with such fury that the prow deeply plowed the beach and stuck fast, while oncoming waves broke her stern to pieces.

But what about the prisoners? The soldiers advised the centurion to kill them lest they should escape, "but the centurion desiring to save Paul kept them from their purpose." His kindness to Paul is very marked here—he would save all the rest to save him. Then at his command those that could swim flung themselves into the sea and swam to shore. The rest availed themselves of boards and thus got to land. Thus Paul's words proved true.

In this is presented a most striking picture of all the children of God, and of the Church of Christ. For just as all who entered that vessel, threatened as they were with destruction on the voyage, and were shipwrecked in landing, yet not one of the two hundred and seventy-six souls was lost. So all who set out in the Ark (Christ), the saved, the blood-washed, are SURE of coming to land, of reaching the desired haven, the Father's house. The Devil may cause fierce tempests to sweep o'er life's dark wintry sea, and the poor storm-lashed voyagers may expect to be engulfed by every surging wave, but, blessed be

His name, He who sits above the water-floods will see to it in His inscrutable wisdom, and by His almighty power, that every one of His children reaches Home. As another has said, "He has not promised His children a pleasant voyage, but He has promised them a sure landing."

Just as the ship was broken to atoms, so the Church as a vessel of testimony for God in the world is shattered on the rocks of divisions, contentions, worldliness and foul heresies—a hopeless ruin. Sad, but such is the condition, and better things cannot be expected this side of the Lord's coming. Then all will be righted. Come, Lord Jesus!

After leaving the island and sailing on toward Rome in another vessel, the centurion gave his respected prisoner the privilege of visiting the children of God at Puteoli. And through his kindness the brethren from Rome (who heard of his coming and went to Appii Forum to meet him) were permitted to meet the dear bond-servant of Christ, and to accompany him the rest of the way, to his and their joy and comfort. And when the city on seven hills was reached the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, who doubtless at once hurried them to prison, "but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier who kept him."

And we can easily read between the lines that Julius who had treated him with such courtesy and respect, on delivering the prisoners to the captain of the guard, would single out the little man who had in faithfulness rebuked, in tender-

ness admonished, who had so wisely counselled and so accurately forecasted on the mad watery waste, who had so reverently thanked God for the food in the presence of them all, when the vessel was reeling in the storm, who shook the venomous snake from his hand and suffered no harm, who cured the father of Publius, and many that had diseases on the island, as one that ought to be free, one who was by no means worthy of bonds, yea, whose honor was maliciously stained with the disgrace of a felon.

We have no record of Julius turning to God. We trust that he did, for he was wondrously privileged in having entrusted to his care for months one of the most devoted and famous sons in the royal family of God. And if his privilege was great, so was his responsibility. To his praise, be it said, he was courteous to Paul; but was he courteous and kind to himself? If he rejected Christ whom Paul preached he was not. "All they that hate Me (says Christ by His Spirit) love death" (Prov. 8:36). To reject Him is to reject life and blessing. To hate Him (refuse Him) is to hate all that man naturally loves—life, joy, and blessing!

Reader, consider well. Will *you* be your own eternal enemy by rejecting God's reconciling love and His saving grace manifested toward you in the death of His Son?

A Soldier

We have just seen that Julius on arriving at Rome delivered his prisoners to the captain of the guard. We know not the nature of their crimes, nor the duration of their prison terms. But from Acts 28 we know that Paul was allowed to dwell by himself in his own hired house in the custody of a soldier for "two whole years."

Some think that during this time a quaternion of soldiers had charge of him—each soldier guarding him six hours. Peter, you will remember, in prison under Herod was guarded by four quaternions (Acts 12). But as Paul was not in prison, but in his rented quarters, he was not under such strict surveillance. So we believe according to the Divine affirmation that he was in charge of "a soldier," or, as the margin reads, "the soldier that guarded him." In verse 20 he speaks of "this chain," and doubtless according to Roman custom he was chained to the soldier.

We believe it may be asserted without exaggeration or fear of contradiction that this unnamed Roman guardsman was the most highly privileged unsaved mortal on God's footstool at that time. We trust that he was liberated from sin's yoke long before his official responsibility ended by the liberation of the apostle. Being constantly with this supremely devoted servant of God he lived in the atmosphere of heaven for two years.

After the first three days at Rome Paul called the chief of the Jews together that he might solemnly bring before them things pertaining to their salvation and to the glory of their covenant-keeping God. He told them that on their account and for the hope of Israel, he was "bound with this chain," and shortly after this session with them another conference was appointed, to which "there came many to his lodging, to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, from morning till evening" (ver. 23). The Spirit of God made a scoring that day, for in ver. 24 we read, "Some believed the things that were spoken," but to those who refused to believe what was proclaimed to them, Paul read a searching portion from Isaiah's prophecy which fitted their wilful rejection of the truth. Then he poured into their tingling ears this glorious message, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it" (ver. 28).

We know not what effect all these weighty and stirring tones had upon his guarding soldier as he heard "these Jews" in solemn tones and grave, with fire and zeal debate the burning question of their responsibility to Jehovah. It may be that he did not understand Hebrew, so all would be a conglomeration of unintelligible sounds; but Paul knew his language, and he had told the Jews that the salvation of God was sent unto the Gentiles. His joyful boast was that he was "not ashamed

of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." He was "debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians, both to the wise, and to the unwise," and he affirmed that he was ready "to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." So here he was at Rome by the providence of God, though in chains. His guardsman was a Gentile; therefore, with what earnestness of heart and joy of soul he would at once begin to carry out his God-given commission by pouring the charming truths of the gospel into this heathen's ear. He was faithful to the Lord, and to his guard, "Instant in season, and out of season," by day and by night, as they ate, and as they couched. So that if this guardsman missed heaven it was not his faithful prisoner's fault. He heard his pleadings, he saw his tears, and he heard his prayers. And no doubt this unceasing earnestness and faithfulness continued throughout the two-year term in which they were constantly together.

In the last two verses of Acts we read Paul "received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, no man forbidding him." Thus he had perfect liberty to freely preach and teach God's life-giving Word. If he was prohibited from going out to the people with heaven's message, they were unhindered from coming in to hear heaven's messenger expound the lively oracles of God, and He only knows the harvest of blessing resulting from the faithful sowing of those two eventful years.

Paul was no stranger to chains and jails; he was at home in them—not that he loved them, but he would serve God in spite of them. He viewed them as fresh channels of ministry. “In every city bonds and afflictions abide me” (Acts 20: 23) was the Holy Spirit’s affirmation early in his walk of faith. But in all his imprisonments, chains, persecutions, his faith was strong, his hope was bright, his peace was a deep flowing river, and his joy a gushing stream. He had hell *behind* him, heaven *in* and *before* him, and the world as a foe *beneath* his feet. Who, or what could conquer such a man as this? The Almighty was his defence.

At Philippi he and Silas stirred nocturnal gloom with prayer and praise till God’s earthquake rent the jail asunder, and put the turnkey into such a fever of conviction that he cried out in anguish of soul, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

At Cæsarea as a prisoner before Felix he thundered notes of “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” until the dissolute Governor trembled, and later, in the same city, as a preacher in chains he related his conversion, exalted Christ, and preached the gospel before Festus and king Agrippa with such fervency and power that the king cried out in open court, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

This man who was committed to the soldier’s charge at Rome was no common personage. He had preached in jails and courts—to high officials, national dignitaries, and crowned heads. He was

a student under Gamaliel (a doctor of great repute), a graduate of Jerusalem's law school, a linguist, a member of the Sanhedrin, and above all earth's flaring titles he was an Ambassador of "the God of all grace," and one of the most honorable and devoted sons in the Royal Family of Heaven.

If this petty officer in Roman service felt proud of his charge it is hoped that he felt the responsibility resting upon him of receiving the message of life through this bond-servant of "the Most High." If the glories of heaven and the woes of hell were not realities to him under such God-granted privileges it was because he was in the firm embrace of Satan—man's infernal foe.

And, unsaved reader, what shall be said of you and your privileges? If Christ said "*Woe*" to the inhabitants of Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt. 11) because of their base rejection of Him during His life, what of you who are still rejecting "the great salvation" that He offers you through His death and resurrection? Beware! Beware, lest your grace-despising indifference brings you to judgment, and heats the furnace of your remorse to a never-cooling degree.

Great is thy privilege, great is thy light,
Woe to thy soul if thou lovest the night—
What can there be, but judgment for thee,
If truth thou dost constantly fight?

At the expiration of two years the apostle was released and enjoyed a season of liberty. He traveled extensively, preached continually, taught

the saints, established churches, and wrote several epistles. But again he was apprehended by the enemies of the Cross. On this occasion he was placed under Cæsar's Imperial Guards at Rome. But this did not abash his soul nor quench the fervency of his spirit, for we find he soon had converts in Cæsar's palace. In writing to the Philippians he joyfully exclaims, "My bonds in Christ are made manifest in all the palace, and in all other places" (Phil. 1:13), and at the close of the epistle (ver. 22) the saints of Cæsar's household send greetings with the apostle to Philippi. Thus as a valiant soldier of Christ he pressed the battle to the very home of the far-famed Emperor.

Since he had some golden sheaves from the Imperial Court to lay at the Master's feet, we can hope the soldier who was his first guard at Rome was among them.

It is generally believed that from this imprisonment he was also released, and had a season of itinerating ministry ere he was seized by Nero, that blood-thirsty lion of Rome, under whose reign he won the martyr's crown. But even the prospect of execution did not dim or cool that faith that caused him to be an unflinching soldier of Christ since the day he heard His voice and saw His glory on the Damascus road—a glory that the devil himself could not shroud, and that eclipsed all this world's glory as much as the sun outshines a candle.

As Paul sat in the gloom of his dungeon he looked out through his bright window of hope and saw

the glory eternal beyond that awaited him. As he penned his last inspired letter to Timothy, his own dear son in the faith, he looked backward, upward, and onward, and we know something of the glory that was flooding his soul as we listen to the triumphant shout of this "valiant-for-the-truth" warrior, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4: 7, 8). From the day of his second birth he had "set the Lord" and "that day" "always before him." He "kept his body under," the world in its place, and through the power of Christ that rested upon him the devil was constantly a defeated foe, therefore he "finished his course with joy" (Acts 20: 24). That which from his conversion he determined by the grace of God to do was now accomplished; consequently "the crown of righteousness" (crown for right-doing) shone in all its heavenly brilliancy in faith's anticipation.

He had exhorted Timothy "to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" and to "fight the good fight of faith." He did not admonish another to do what he was unwilling to do himself. One has but to read the last half of the eleventh chapter of Second Corinthians to see what this dear man of God endured. Troubles, afflictions, and persecutions constantly rolled upon him like mountain-waves in all their wrathful forces. The devil and the world seemed to delight in pounding him upon the anvil of their

hate throughout his entire Christian course. He proved the truth of what he wrote, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 2:12). But by "fighting the good fight, finishing his course, and keeping the faith" he proved that he was "a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and by sealing his testimony with his blood he proved that Christ was dearer to him than life itself, and by being faithful unto death he won "the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

The soldier that kept him in his hired quarters and Cæsar's men of war might boast of being Roman soldiers, but how infinitely superior the dignity of "a good soldier of Jesus Christ." They might fight for Rome (and behind for the devil), but he fought for God. They fought to kill, but he struggled to persuade men that God was offering them life eternal as a free gift.

This champion in divine warfare exhorted the Ephesians to "put on the whole armour of God" (Eph. 6:13). Having on this full suit of arms they would be able to "stand" and "withstand." This equipment means full preparation for offensive and defensive warfare.

Behold Paul, this dauntless giant of faith, as he stands arrayed in God's shining panoply. His loins are girded with the golden girdle of truth. His heart is covered with the gleaming breastplate of righteousness. His feet are shod with the glorious gospel of peace. On his head is the burnished helmet of salvation. One hand holds the glistening shield of faith, and the other wields the invincible sword of the Spirit, which is the

Word of God. Then the inward, or hidden source of power—"praying always with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication."

With this divinely supplied equipment he fought and overcome. Being "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," no foe, carnate or incarnate, visible or invisible, could vanquish him.

Doubtless his enemies thought they scored a great victory in his death, but that was Paul's supreme triumph. It proved in a way that nothing else could, his faith in God and his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It was thus Christ's death proved His love for us in a way that His life never could.

Paul was an unconquerable soldier, a mighty runner on the race-track of grace, a dauntless defender and proclaimer of the faith, a chosen and fitted vessel, a faithful and unwearying servant, an unfolder of the mysteries of God, a world-apostle—God's ambassador in sin's country. All these glorious titles of honor, and many more that might be produced, sprang from the fact of his sonship—that he was a son made possible all the rest.

He lived a God-honoring life, he died a Christ-honoring death, and his measureless measure of bliss is "an eternal weight of glory" with Christ.

Remember, Christian, we have the same life—eternal life—that Paul had. We have the same Father, the same Saviour, and are indwelt by the same Spirit, and the same heaven lies before us.

We are in the same world that Paul was in, and yet how different! Destitution, affliction, persecution, chains, prisons, and the executioner's sword, all strove together to discourage and appall his soul, yet he unswervingly followed the Lord to the last step, though that step was martyrdom.

We live in an age like heaven (for serving God) compared with that of Paul, and yet, alas, what unthankfulness and unfaithfulness mark our passing years! May his devotedness and faithfulness to God shame us into emulation, and spur us on to serve Him more earnestly, and to cleave to the Lord with increasing purpose of heart.

Our lack of faith and faithfulness
Should cause our hearts some real distress;
Whene'er we think of saints of old—
Of how they did of God take hold—
We see how we have strayed.

Forgive us, Lord, for straying feet,
For appetites for Egypt's meat.
Oh, cause our starving souls to burn,
That we may in contrition turn
To Thee, the Living Bread!

Heaven and Hell are Alike

---in some respects

We trust the above declaration will not alarm our sensitive friends, and cause them to retort with fiery indignation, "Contrast, and not comparison, is the only word that can be employed in describing the other-world abodes."

All truth comes to us by contrast and comparison. This being so, we can only discuss these momentous themes in the above terms.

There is no greater contrast within the realm of thought than that which exists between heaven and hell, and yet they may be compared in several respects.

This world is a world of contrasts, and the Bible is a Book of contrasts. We shall now contrast and compare.

In nature we have "seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night," the lofty skies and the low-lying earth, the mountain's peak and the ocean's depth, etc., etc.

In the Book we see God and Satan, sin and holiness, freedom and bondage, law and grace, war and peace, sickness and health, life and death, heaven and hell, and so on—*ad infinitum*.

If sin were non-existent jails would not be needed, but when men trample law and order beneath their feet to accomplish their own desire to their neighbor's hurt they must be restrained by the power of the Nation's arm. And when man de-

spises God, serves and follows Satan, treats righteousness, love and grace with contempt, and rolls sin under his tongue as a sweet morsel, he must learn to his remorse that the Almighty has a court, a day of judgment and a sentence—not here, but beyond the river. Sin, if unforgiven, carries with it eternal consequences.

In His long-suffering grace God may allow a moral outlaw to pursue the path of life to old age without putting a straw in his way; it might even seem as though He was throwing sun-beams in rich profusion in the rebel's pathway; but be sure of this, he is "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5). On the other hand the child of God may be living "soberly, righteously, and godly," and yet the thunder-storms of adversity, trouble and distress may be bursting upon him almost every mile of life's journey. To those who behold his struggles it might seem as though heaven itself was frowning upon his very existence (see Eccl. 7:15; 8:12). But God is keeping books, and on that day of life's reviewing He will give him a reward for his faithfulness, and for his patience in the furnace of affliction. Man works in time, but gets his pay (saint and sinner) in eternity—God's pay-day comes beyond the roll of years—for the sinner at "the Great White Throne," for the saint after "the Judgment Seat of Christ." This does not deny the fact that both classes receive a measure of pay here.

The inhabitants of heaven and hell are supplied from human ranks (except the angelic), so of course from this world. The stream of humanity

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divides into two at death — death is the segregating point. Each class goes to its own place. For the unsaved, death is the gang-plank leading to the ship of despair that drifts forever on “the lake of fire,” but for the saved, it is the gateway to “the Paradise of God” which is fragrant with immortal bloom. One is for eternity, and so is the other. In this they are *exactly alike*—no contrast here. But there are contrasts as broad as the stretches of infinity. Some of these are the palace of God and the abode of Satan; the bourne of the lost and the home of the saved; the wail of the damned and the song of the redeemed; the gloom of the banished and the bliss of the glorified; unjust forever, righteous forever; filthy forever, holy forever; the darkness of hell and the brightness of heaven, and so on—to a wilderness of contrasts. But a striking comparison is found in the fact that both in heaven and hell there will be multitudes of the blackest, most wicked characters that ever stained the calendars of Time. The two thieves that were crucified with Christ both alike were bad; but one we know went to Paradise, and the other to its awful opposite. So down through the ages the river of Time has been pouring its hosts into two eternal oceans of contrast.

There will also be in each place myriads of the most moral, reputable people that were ever enrolled among the denizens of earth. Those among the lost thought they were good enough without Christ, that they did not need to be “born again,” and so throughout their lives they politely gave

God the lie by refusing to believe His word that, "All have sinned;" while those among the saved of this class believed what Christ said to Nicodemus, the moralist, "Ye must be born again," and so they trusted Him and were born from above. In these cases also heaven and hell are comparable.

Now let us sum it all up by asking where is the comfort in comparing heaven and hell. We know the contrast is appalling, but is the comparison a whit brighter? What is the difference whether a man is burned to death or drowned? The contrast between fire and water does not make the fatality any more welcome. Hell still stands out in all its horrors from whatever angle it may be viewed. Even a sword may be tinselled and mantled with all the colors of the rainbow, and made to appear beautiful and pleasing, but not so with hell—it never can be made charming and inviting.

Hell is a dark and dreadful bourne,
Estranged from joy and light,
Where aliens in their travail mourn
Throughout eternal night.

It has been solemnly said that over the door of hell these words might be truly inscribed, "Abandon hope, all ye who enter here," and over the door of heaven, "All who enter here have all their hopes gloriously more than realized." And again, "Hell is merited, but heaven is by grace."

There is a way to *keep out* of hell, but no way to *get out*.

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'Tis living faith in Christ alone
Prevents an entrance there;
All who reject the Son of God
Are headed for despair.

Exemption from hell and a place in heaven are only assured through a heart-trust in Christ (John 8:24).

The issue between God and the sinner is not the “*sin-question*” but the “*Son-question*.” God has made ample provision for sin’s forgiveness in the cross of His Son, and if He and His substitutionary work be despised there is nothing left for the rebel but to be tossed forever on hell’s midnight sea.

As to Himself Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6).

There’s but one way to yonder home,
Eternal, bright and fair—
That way is Christ, for only He
Can take a sinner there.
Receive Him now, O sinner friend,
And heaven’s day with Him you’ll spend,
To His and your delight.

Some say, “One world at a time. We were not interested in this world until we came to it, and why be occupied with the next till we reach it?” This is the devil’s weird philosophy and sophistry—his soul-blinding dope for the masses. Look at it naturally and practically. Is a ticket to a foreign land (Europe, or elsewhere) secured after its shore is reached, or before the voyage is be-

gun? O traveler to eternity, be as sane in spiritual matters as you are in temporal affairs. Let not the devil fool you out of consistency and common-sense. Even the "stow-away" chooses his port before he boards the vessel.

If you asked a man on the train where he was going, and he replied he did not know, he had no objective in view, you would consider him ready for an insane asylum, or at least that he ought to be under a guardian. And are you who are considered intelligent, far-seeing, and going in for "things worth while," making a better showing on life's highway than he? According to wisdom's bureau, unless you have secured in Jesus' blood a passport to heaven you are infinitely below him in the scale of propriety and consistency, for his is a comparatively trivial matter, but yours is as weighty and important as heaven and hell—the most ponderous issue in the realm of man's existence.

And now, reader, ere we part company, allow me in all friendliness and earnestness to ask the thrilling question of the ages, *Whither art thou bound?* Is it to the habitation of everlasting night—the "outer darkness" where no star of hope shall ever rise to pierce the gloom of thy despair? But if thou canst "in full assurance of faith" joyfully exclaim, "My title to glory I read in His blood," then indeed thy hope is bright, and thy prospect without a cloud.

Now spend thy days for Him
Who gave His life for thee,
And henceforth let thy watchword be—
"Not I, but Christ."

My Conversion

I purpose to fling my name in to swell the "crowd" that gives this book its title.

Earth's wisest king voiced a startling truth when he said, "Better is the day of death than the day of one's birth" (Eccl. 7:1). Birth launches one on Time's career, but death starts him on Eternity's interminable march. But I want to speak of that event which comes between, and which *only* makes the day of death better than the day of birth—conversion. He who dies without this change better were it for him if he had never been born.

My father was born in England, and my mother in Ireland. While very young they sailed with their parents to that part of North America over which floats the "Union Jack." They were reared in different orthodox denominations, one of which was very formal, and the other had but scanty light. After they were married they received much spiritual help and blessing through gifted and deeply-taught evangelists and teachers of the Word. By the time that I was old enough to receive instruction they had, by reading and hearing the Book of eternal wisdom expounded, a well-grounded faith. Since the reading of Holy Writ in the home was their constant delight, and the Lord was daily sought in prayer and praise, of

me was it true (to their honor be it said), "From a child I knew the Holy Scriptures." But one may know the Bible and the Christ of the Bible intellectually, historically, and theoretically, and not know Him savingly and experimentally—such was my case. As to moral status I was the very antipodes of the flagrant characters we have been reviewing, and in comparing myself with the majority that came under my observation I was proud of my probity in contrast to their profligacy. Nevertheless, I knew that I was in the "none-righteous-no-not-one" class, and in the "all-have-sinned" class, and so realized that the truth of these positive and negative scriptures would insure my condemnation.

The broad road is wide enough to have two sides. Thousands are traveling on the dirty side of it, they find their joy in the company of the vile and the wicked; while others are journeying on the clean moral side of it, and seek companionship with the amiable and reputable. But *all* on that road are going on to the same dark terminus.

I had a slavish fear of sin, or rather of what sin brings—judgment. The thought of telling a lie, using profane language, and of plunging into the grosser forms of wickedness almost congealed my soul. "There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:18) describes vast multitudes of our race, but like Obadiah I "feared the Lord greatly" (1 Kings 18:3).

But let not my reader think that I was without proclivities, for I had the strongest propensities toward evil, and chafed to be in the swim with

the ungodly, but was restrained by the heavy hand of fear. A sinner without the fear of God will follow the pull of his fallen nature, but one who fears the God of judgment will be held back from fulfilling his base desires. Parents, teach your children the fear of God. Solemnly tell them that *God hates sin*, and that *He must punish it*, but that He loves them, and will save them if they penitently turn to Him. Cornelius "feared God with all his house," and it resulted in his own salvation, and that of many more beneath his roof (Acts 10).

As I look back over the hill country of my experience it is evident that from a very early age I was being led by the hand of the Spirit along the highway of life to Christ, by the way of "the Slough of Despond" and "the wicket gate." And, be it remembered, no one has ever reached "the Celestial City" but those who have traveled the path of conviction and repentance, and passed through the gateway of new birth.

The things of God and of eternity often towered before my soul with dread alarm. At times I felt that my soul was manifestly the battle-ground of worlds, that opposing powers were contending for me as for a prize. Sometimes it was winter in my soul, and sometimes it was summer. This fitful condition continued till I was fourteen; then the stern blasts of winter stubbornly refused to yield to summer smiles.

This bitter state of soul-agitation lasted about three months, during which time I could say with the Psalmist, "Day and night Thy hand was heavy

upon me; my moisture was turned into the drought of summer" (Ps. 32:4). Since the unrelenting hand of God's Spirit was upon me in compelling power, I was to be a stranger to peace; the spirit of rebellion prompted me to fight against the One who was troubling me with my sins, that I might be made willing to allow Him to take them away, that He might pour into my soul heaven's eternal peace and calm.

The strongest plea that the enemy made at this time to hold me in his slavish kingdom was procrastination. I admitted that I was lost, and that my sins would bar me from heaven's glory, and that I fully intended to be saved some time. Thus I was sueing for peace by trying to make a bargain with the spirit of conviction. How loth the old deceiver is to give up possession of his dupes! The amazing thing is that his victims will side with him, to remain in servitude and misery, and run the risk of meeting the Almighty's righteous ire.

Again the Psalmist's experience was mine, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." I would neither confess my sins to God, nor make known my troubles to my parents. In silence I groaned and sighed for deliverance from my sorrowful bondage. Like Hezekiah I could exclaim, "Behold, for peace (or, before peace) I had great bitterness" (Is. 38:17). My nights were filled with spasmodic visions of woe, and my days with deep soul-perplexity. Mother, noticing my dark moody

condition, enquired as to the cause, but I was gloomily non-committal.

The truth of Christ's coming and the rapture of His saints was familiar to me. Sometimes during night's death-like stillness, chilling fears possessed me that the Lord had come and suddenly caught up my parents to faith's bright homeland, leaving me for judgment. When some slight noise indicated that they were still in the room great was my relief, for this to me was proof that mercy's day had not closed.

These prolonged and painful soul-exercises would submit to none of the arch-deceiver's charms or the world's attractions. Surrender to Christ, and an invitation to enter the door at which He was persistently knocking, was the only refuge for my storm-lashed conscience.

Many a fearless and valiant warrior fighting in a righteous cause has surrendered to avoid extermination, but here was I—a tiny worm of a transient hour—trying to hold a rebel fort against Omnipotence. But after I was made willing through long and losing conflicts to bow to my conquering Benefactor, the enemy tried to persuade me to believe that I must have some part in my deliverance. I knew what Scripture said about being saved by grace through faith. Though John 3:16 and 5:24, and other radiant gems of gospel truth, seemed to stand out before me in transparent clearness, yet the adversary sorely pestered me with thoughts of "doing" as a procuring cause of salvation. Grace on God's part and faith on my part seemed to be too easy a way of obtaining such a "great salvation"—

the magnitude of the "Gift" and the freeness of it confounded me.

This phase of experience continued till I was almost driven to distraction on the dark sea of quandary. But as the darkest hour is just before dawn, so my heavy night of gloom was about to break into God's bright morning of emancipation. The Holy Spirit was leading me, through all the swamps and mazes,

To Christ who died on Calvary's tree
To pay my debt, and set me free
From sin, and coming wrath.

Thanks be unto God, one living look of faith at His atoning Son cleared the whole horizon of all its mist and mystery. The load was lifted, the storm was over, the sky was clear, and I was a delivered and rejoicing soul. Satan was foiled. Christ was triumphant, and I was the booty of the Victor. Like the children of Israel on Canaan's side of the Red Sea, I sang redemption's song to the praise of my Redeemer in a lusty and ecstatic strain.

Now that the valley-gloom was past, and I was skipping on the "Delectable Mountains" of spiritual liberty, I told mother all about my weeks and months of soul-anguish and strife, and of my never-to-be-forgotten deliverance, but she informed me she knew that the Lord had been dealing with me, and that now by my countenance and deportment knew also that I had "reached the land of corn and wine." But she did not want to interfere with the Spirit's work, and so would say

nothing more till I was moved "to tell the story —*saved by grace.*"

What a Saviour, what a salvation, and what a story the ransomed sinner has to sound abroad! There is no theme on earth nor among angelic legions so lofty in strain, so touching in pathos, as the Creator's death for the creature's sin. O my soul, be not thou silent lest the rocks cry out to thy shame!

God has only one Door of refuge for the convicted sinner, that Door is Christ. He said, "I am *the* Door (not *a* door); by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved" (John 10:9). But the devil suggests many avenues of escape from a sin-troubled condition, things and ways too that may be good and right in themselves, reformation, righteous works, Christian rites, and religious affiliations, and all for the purpose of turning the anxious one from Christ and His cross, that the soul may be deceived and eternally lost.

Reader, if you are deceived it is because you do not believe God's undeceiving, illuminating and life-giving Word.

If any one has reason to be more thankful to God for being saved than another, it is one from among the moral or religious class. The ungodly sinner knows he is wrong. His wicked works rise up against him and convict him in the court of his own conscience, and the arch-hoodwinker himself cannot with all his counseling fiends contrive a plan to make him believe he is on the road to heaven. But he has no trouble in causing the moral and religious class to believe they are

in the way of righteousness, and so on the way to that "better country"—they think what they *are*, and what they are *doing*, is pleasing to God, and in the end hope to be accepted of God. And so—

"As an angel of light"
He wins the fight
Over millions of our race.

Satan's mightiest weapon in damnation's scheme is *deception*. He is in the "wholesale" business of deceiving; "he deceiveth the whole world" (Rev. 12: 9). And only those who drink at wisdom's heavenly spring can say with the apostle, "We are not ignorant of Satan's devices" (2 Cor. 2: 11).

More than forty years have swept into eternity's sea since that glad morning dawned on the night of my soul, and yet it is almost as vivid on memory's record as when the storm-clouds rolled away. I have been on the home-stretch longer than the children of Israel wandered in the desert, and can joyfully testify to the sinner-saving and saint-sustaining grace of God. I cannot boast of a failure-less life, or of flawless perfection, but can rejoice in the unwearied love and unfailing faithfulness of the Father's forgiving and tender care.

With the saving and illuminating grace of God there came an impelling desire to make known to others the One who was precious to my soul, and to meet children of God, to rejoice together in what we possess, and in the glories that await our entrance into the saint-thronged courts above. So

by the enabling grace of God I continue to this day.

And reader, in love and faithfulness to you and to the Lord, I thrust this sober question upon you for solemn consideration: Have you been converted—saved—born again?

An intelligent Christian in view of changing worlds, desirous of impressing mortals with God's vital truth to man, ordered these incisive words chiseled upon his tombstone: "Reader, art thou born again? *Remember, there is no salvation without a new birth.*"

A nation-wide evangelist whose voice is now stilled in death used to cry out in clarion notes to his vast audiences, "*Ye must be born again, or never enter heaven.*"

And to Nicodemus, and through him to *you* and to all of Adam's undone race, eternal, incarnate Wisdom cried: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, *Ye must be born again.*" And with added emphasis He exclaimed, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see, or enter the kingdom of God" (John 3: 3, 5).

Since His Word is absolute and everlasting, new birth and heaven are interlocked in God's decree.

Many and varied are the scriptures elucidating this matchless theme. Like so many suns they diffuse floods of celestial light. Some of them point out what it means:

Becoming a new creature2 Cor. 5: 17.
Passing from death unto life1 John 3: 14.
Being made a partaker of the divine nature...2 Pet. 1: 4.

Passing from the power of Satan unto God...Acts 26: 18,
Being born again, of incorruptible seed—

the Word of God.....1 Pet. 1: 23.

Being born of God 1 John 3: 9.

Being born of water (Word) and of the Spirit..John 3: 5.

Christ sums all up with His emphatic "*must*"
—"Ye must be born again" (John 3: 7).

If after such an array of texts any beclouding mist remains, it is dispelled by the clear statement of John 1:12,13; "As many as *received Him*, to them gave He power (right, or authority) to *become sons of God*, even to them that *believe on His name*, which were born, *not of blood*, nor of the *will of the flesh*, nor of the *will of man*, but of *God*." Strong, lucid, soul-liberating, and peace-imparting are the positive and negative truths of these verses.

God has marked the way to His home in letters of living clearness. The cost of the sinner's getting there has all been paid by the infinite and compassionate Redeemer. And if you find yourself forever excluded from its glory it will not be because of any abstruseness in the way of salvation, or of any difficult task imposed upon you, but because of your sheer indifference to His claims, and your utter disregard for the everlasting blessing that He urges you to *freely* receive.

Reject not the light,
Lest your terrible plight
Be the wail of endless remorse.

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